



The First Apocalypse of James: Martyrdom and Sexual Difference

Citation

Haxby, Mikael C. 2013. The First Apocalypse of James: Martyrdom and Sexual Difference. Doctoral dissertation, Harvard University.

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The *First Apocalypse of James*: Martyrdom and Sexual Difference

A dissertation presented

by

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to

The Committee on the Study of Religion

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the subject of

The Study of Religion

Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts

April 26, 2013

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Abstract

My dissertation presents a new reading of a rarely-studied early Christian text, the *First Apocalypse of James*, and seeks to intervene in major scholarly debates concerning martyrdom, scriptural interpretation and sexual difference. I begin by showing how the text exhorts its readers and hearers toward martyrdom by narrating the progress of James, the brother of Jesus, in overcoming his fear and preparing for martyrdom. Here Jesus' revelation to James sets out a ritual of ascent that constitutes the martyr's confession of faith—a previously unattested form to articulate the meaning of dying for God. I use intertextual methods to identify an interpretation of the *Gospel of John* in which Jesus' statements of identity in *John* are read as descriptions of the true nature of the perfected martyr. This analysis locates scripturally-based debates about the nature of Christ within a context in which practices of preparation for martyrdom are being devised. *IApocJas* also reads *Isaiah* to identify female heroes whose example it exhorts James to follow. I use this reading of *IApocJas* to challenge the notion that a strict gendered hierarchy was reinscribed equally by Christian martyrdom texts. Through comparison to select examples of Valentinian theology, I establish that *IApocJas* envisions a productive tension in the divine realms between lower and higher female divine figures. By associating female martyrs with the higher female divinities and contrasting them to the lower female divinities, *IApocJas* valorizes martyrs as female and thus complicates any straightforward masculinization of the martyrs. My reading of *IApocJas* broadens our understanding of how Christians prepared themselves for martyrdom by interpreting scripture in innovative ways, devising new ritual practices, and developing distinctive articulations of human and divine sexual difference.

Table of Contents

1) Introduction	1
The Discourse of Orthodoxy and Heresy	7
Martyrdom	10
Sexual Difference	16
Manuscript and Dating	21
Structure of the Dissertation	26
2) Preparation for Martyrdom	30
James' Preparation for Martyrdom	35
Fear and Knowledge in Ancient Philosophy	39
Practices of Understanding and Effective Theology	43
Martyrdom, Christology, and "Docetism"	53
Practices of Discernment and the Discourse of Martyrdom	57
3) Interpretation of Scripture	67
The Intertextual Gap: Ethics and Christology	71
Response to an Anticipated Source-Critical Objection	78
Readings of Scripture in the Passage on the "Seven Women"	81
The <i>Dialogue with Trypho</i> and the Christological Reading of Scripture	85
Ptolemy's <i>Letter to Flora</i> and the Ethical Reading of Scripture	89
The Three Women as Moral Exemplars and the Ethical Reading of <i>Isaiah</i>	92
The Ethical and Christological Reading of <i>Leviticus</i>	95
4) Sexual Difference and Valentinian Theology	100
Sexual Difference in Theology	107
The <i>Excerpts from Theodotus</i> and Valentinian Theology	112
5) The Seven Women Whom All the Generations Bless	124
The Works of Femaleness	133
The Three Women Martyrs and the Power of Imitation	142
6) Conclusion: Martyrdom and Sexual Difference	149
Appendix: An Outline of the <i>First Apocalypse of James</i>	153
Bibliography	154

Acknowledgements

A dissertation is never the product of a single person's labor, and I have been lucky to share in this process with wonderful teachers, colleagues, family and friends. I am deeply grateful to my advisor, Professor Karen King, whose critiques, suggestions and encouragement made this dissertation possible. Beginning with our second-year independent study and the first time she suggested this "Apocalypse of James" text might be something I would be interested in, Professor King has been an invaluable mentor through the writing process as well as a constantly engaging and challenging dialogue partner. Professors Amy Hollywood and Laura Nasrallah were both generous with their support and feedback as members of my committee. I count myself fortunate to have been helped through the dissertation process by three such fabulous teachers and mentors, and I hope that their excellent work is reflected in this dissertation. I want to recognize also the help and inspiration of a number of other Harvard faculty members to whom I am grateful, including Giovanni Bazzana, François Bovon, Emma Dench and especially Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza.

My colleagues at Harvard Divinity School and in the Committee on the Study of Religion have read, critiqued and helped to shape much of this dissertation. I thank the members of the New Testament and Christian Origins doctoral seminar for reading carefully and questioning brilliantly a number of drafts of different chapters. The members of the Columbia New Testament Seminar and the Nordic Nag Hammadi and Gnosticism Network I likewise count among the excellent readers and dialogue partners I have been able to engage with during this process. I also thank the less official Dissertation Freakout Club for their advice, their arguments and their support. Taylor Petrey and Katherine Shaner in particular have been ideal friends and colleagues, willing to chase down hour-long debates about Foucault, to challenge one other in

respectful dialogue, and always, always to gossip. I have also been lucky have among my dedicated and able readers my mother and father, Beth and Bob Grams Haxby, as well as my uncle Paul Grams. I cannot put into words my thankfulness to Elizabeth Jalkut, and so I won't.

For Beth and Bob.

Chapter 1: Introduction

“Since you asked about femaleness, listen,” says Jesus at the beginning of the *First Apocalypse of James* (ΕΠΙΕΙΔΗ [Δ]ΚΩ[Ι]ΝΕ ΕΤΒΕ ΤΗΝΤΟΙΜΕ CΩΤ[Μ]; 10.19–20).¹ Yet, in the text up to this point, there has been no question asked about femaleness. The subsequent narrative of *IApocJas* is structured primarily as a dialogue between Jesus and his brother, James, in which James asks questions and Jesus provides revelation. It begins, however, with an answer to an unknown question. I suggest that *IApocJas* begins with a puzzle—what was this question?—in order to highlight the importance of the concept of “femaleness.” In this dissertation, I will seek to address the unraised question about femaleness from the first page of the text. As *IApocJas* moves forward, Jesus explains the nature of femaleness through theological revelation and through discussions of female disciples and martyrs. These martyrs, I will argue, along with “femaleness” provide the keys to understanding *IApocJas*.

The text concludes with James’ martyrdom. The beginning and the end of the text thus bring forth the central concerns of *IApocJas*, sexual difference and martyrdom. The narrative arc of the text can also be understood in terms of martyrdom. James asks questions of Jesus and receives revelation. As he receives revelation, he grows progressively more prepared for martyrdom, confident in his knowledge and no longer wracked by fear. These revelations principally concern the nature of “femaleness” as a figure in the divine realms, and through them Jesus provides James the knowledge he needs to endure persecution. Further, James takes as

¹ There are two extant versions of the *First Apocalypse of James*, both written in Coptic, one in the Tchacos Codex and the other in Nag Hammadi Codex V. I have quoted here from the Tchacos Codex, which is the better preserved of the two. My practice through this dissertation will be to cite first from the Tchacos Codex version, unless in rare instances the Nag Hammadi version contains a more complete record. For the lines quoted here, the parallel in Nag Hammadi Codex V is practically identical, lacking only the command to listen. “Since you asked about femaleness” (ΕΠΙΔΗ ΔΚΩ[Ι]ΝΕ ΠΕΔ ΤΗΝΤΟΙΜΕ; V 24.26–27). I will discuss the manuscript evidence for *IApocJas* below on pages 21–26. William R. Schoedel, “The (First) Apocalypse of James,” in *Nag Hammadi Codices V, 2–5 and VI with Papyrus Berolinensis 8502, 1 and 4* (ed. Douglas M. Perrott; NHS XI; Leiden: Brill, 1979), 65–104; Rodolphe Kasser and Gregor Wurst, eds, *The Gospel of Judas: Critical Edition* (Washington, D.C.: National Geographic, 2007).

moral exemplars in his preparation a set of female martyrs. The two leading, interrelated concerns of the *First Apocalypse of James*, then, are martyrdom and sexual difference.

This is a common concatenation of themes in early Christian literature. Christians and other persecuted groups developed notions of martyrdom in response to the risk of persecution and execution under Roman law.² Such notions of martyrdom were significantly determined by the usual space in which executions took place, the Roman arena. The arena was a key location for the working out of gendered power relations in the ancient Mediterranean world.³ Within literature on martyrdom, the logic of the arena pressed upon the persecuted communities a need to embody certain virtues coded as male within ancient understandings of sexual difference.⁴ As

² G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, "Why Were the Early Christians Persecuted?" *Past and Present* 26 (1963), 6–38; A. N. Sherwin-White, "Why Were the Early Christians Persecuted? —An Amendment," *Past and Present* 27 (1964), 23–27; de Ste. Croix, "Why Were the Early Christians Persecuted? —A Rejoinder," *Past and Present* 27 (1964), 28–33; A. N. Sherwin-White, "The Early Persecutions and Roman Law," in *The Letters of Pliny* (ed. A. N. Sherwin-White; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), 772–787; Timothy D. Barnes, "Pre-Decian Acta Martyrum," *Journal of Theological Studies* 19 (1968), 509–531; Gary Bisbee, *Pre-Decian Acts of the Martyrs and Commentarii* (HDR 22; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988); Candida Moss, *The Other Christs: Imitating Jesus in Ancient Christian Ideologies of Martyrdom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010). Scholarly consensus holds that persecutions of Christians were sporadic and local until the reign of Decius around 250, and still rare until the early fourth century CE. A general precedent (not an official law) that Christianity was illegal seems to have existed by the early second century CE, as attested in Pliny's letters, but it may not have been universally recognized, and governors and other authorities had broad discretion over the interpretation of the precedent. An ongoing scholarly discussion treats the question of the "origins" of martyrdom. In this dissertation I will treat martyrdom as discourse and practice, constantly in a process of development and not determined by its origins. See below, pages 10–15. W. H. C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church: A Study of a Conflict from the Maccabees to Donatus* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1981); G. W. Bowersock, *Martyrdom and Rome* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Daniel Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Early Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

³ Monique Clavel-Lèvéque, "L'Espace des jeux dans le monde romain: Hégémonie, symbolique et pratique sociale," *ANRW* 2.16.3 (1986), 2406–2563; Carlin Barton, *The Sorrows of the Ancient Romans: The Gladiator and the Monster* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992); Erik Gunderson, "The Ideology of the Arena," *Classical Antiquity* 15 (1996), 113–151; Alison Futrell, *Blood in the Arena: The Spectacle of Roman Power* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997), 77–120; Elizabeth Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 104–133; Christopher Frilingos, *Spectacles of Empire: Monsters, Martyrs, and the Book of Revelation* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

⁴ There is an extensive recent literature on martyrdom and sexual difference. See Castelli, "I Will Make Mary Male: Pieties of the Body and Gender Transformation in Early Christianity," in *Body Guards: The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity* (ed. Julia Epstein and Kristina Straub; New York: Routledge, 1991); Chris Jones, "Women, Death, and the Law during the Christian Persecutions," in *Martyrs and Martyrologies* (ed. Diana Wood; Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 23–34; Castelli, "Visions and Voyeurism: Holy Women and the Politics of Sight in Early Christianity," in *Protocol of the Colloquy of the Center for Hermeneutical Studies, 6 December 1992* (ed.

Erik Gunderson argues, “Nearly every major theme of the Roman power structure was deployed in the spectacles,” and this included the strict hierarchy maintained by “repression of women and exaltation of bellicose masculinity.”⁵ Truly “bellicose” masculinity was unavailable to prisoners about to be killed, but martyrdom texts offer another strategy: emphasizing the masculine self-control and steadfast endurance of martyrs.⁶ The texts employ gendered notions of philosophical virtue to establish the masculine character of the martyrs. As Elizabeth Castelli argues, “The masculine ideal of stoic fortitude dominates the arena, and it is so crucial to Christian claims to virtue that women can provisionally embody it.”⁷

In the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, for instance, a voice comes from heaven as Polycarp enters the arena, saying, “Play the man.”⁸ Polycarp will give a great performance of self-control and endurance in the arena, which will demonstrate his masculinity. In early Christian literature, as Castelli points out, it was not only men who might embody masculinity in the arena. In the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, when Perpetua has a vision of herself engaging in combat

Christopher Ocker; Berkeley, Calif.: Center for Hermeneutical Studies, 1994), 1–20; Virginia Burrus, “Reading Agnes: The Rhetoric of Gender in Ambrose and Prudentius,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 3:1 (1995), 25–46; Brent D. Shaw, “Body/Power/Identity: Passions of the Martyrs,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 4:3 (1996), 269–312; Tessa Rajak, “Dying for the Law: The Martyr’s Portrait in Jewish-Greek Literature,” in *Portraits: Biographical Representation in the Greek and Latin Literature of the Roman Period* (ed. M.J. Edwards and Simon Swain; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 39–68; Janice Capel Anderson and Stephen D. Moore, “Taking It Like a Man: Masculinity in 4 Maccabees,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 117.2 (1998), 249–273; Boyarin, *Dying for God*; Moore, *God’s Beauty Parlor: And Other Queer Spaces in and around the Bible* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2001); Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*; Frilingos, *Spectacles of Empire*; Burrus, “Torture and Travail: Producing the Christian Martyr,” in *A Feminist Companion to Patristic Studies* (ed. Amy Jo Levine and Maria Mayo Robbins; New York: T&T Clark, 2008), 56–71; Stephanie Cobb, *Dying to Be Men: Gender and Language in Early Christian Martyr Texts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

⁵ Gunderson, “The Ideology of the Arena,” 140.

⁶ On the valuation of “endurance” as the paradigmatic masculine virtue of the martyr, see Shaw, “Body/Power/Identity,” 284–291. For a critique of Shaw’s emphasis on the feminine quality of endurance in ancient thought, see Cobb, *Dying to Be Men*, 134–135.

⁷ Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*, 121.

⁸ *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 9.1. The Greek is ἀνδρείου. For the text and translation, see Herbert Musurillo, *Acts of the Christian Martyrs* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 106–131. See also the discussion in Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*, 61–62.

in the arena, she imagines, “suddenly I became a man” to fight her opponent. She says that she interpreted this vision to mean that she must die in the arena.⁹ In order to reclaim an honored, masculine position, Christians determined that martyrs had to display masculine virtue. Both male and female martyrs might attain self-mastery and demonstrate their fortitude, but always within a system where the virtuous Christian is the masculine one. As Castelli puts it, “the gender binary need not always be binding though its intrinsic value system (the masculine is always necessarily more positively charged than the feminine) remains relentlessly intact.”¹⁰ This relentless hierarchical model structures early Christian martyrdom literature and enables, in Castelli’s reading, only certain strategies for authorizing martyrs.

Stephanie Cobb argues that Christian martyrdom texts make use of a set of feminizing strategies which contrast to the masculinizing ones. Cobb demonstrates first how martyrdom texts depict female martyrs as masculine, or even as becoming male, in order to show the greatness of the Christians.¹¹ Yet, Cobb also shows how Christian texts used strategies of feminizing women martyrs—emphasizing their beauty, their motherhood, the physical character of their bodies on display in the arena. In the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, the depiction of the martyrs’ deaths includes a story of Perpetua and Felicitas being sent into the arena “stripped naked” to the prurient horror even of the crowd.¹² Cobb argues that this inverse strategy of feminizing the martyrs served to blunt the possibly radical nature of these texts’ masculinizing claims.

⁹ *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* 10.7 (Musurillo).

¹⁰ Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*, 63.

¹¹ Cobb, *Dying to Be Men*, 97–107. See also Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*, 62–67 and 121–122.

¹² *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* 20.2 (Musurillo).

The texts, therefore, in various ways, attempt to balance appropriate behavior by, on the one hand, illustrating the necessity and possibility of women moving toward the ideals of masculinity, and, on the other hand, ensuring that the female martyr is placed safely back within the confines of proper, domestic femininity.¹³

The reading depends on identifying strategies as either masculinizing or feminizing, with one side empowering Christian women and the other restraining them. Cobb's critique usefully challenges assumptions in the field that early Christian martyrdom texts simply and straightforwardly masculinize martyrs in order to valorize them. At the same time, Cobb suggests that "masculinization" and "feminization" are complementary strategies. The same hierarchical model of sexual difference is maintained. Masculinizing martyrs serves to authorize the Christian community to outsiders, while feminizing martyrs keeps women in their place inside the community.

Against these descriptions of relentlessly hierarchical gender distinctions, Virginia Burrus suggests that martyrdom texts exhibit a more "complex gendering" than has often been acknowledged.¹⁴ She argues that the process of audience identification with the female martyrs opened up, first, "spaces for the production of novel female subjectivities that may provide sites of ambivalent identification for female readers." At the same time, "for male authors and readers, they also, I suggest, offer an ambiguously 'feminized' male subjectivity."¹⁵ Burrus suggests that strategies perhaps aimed at maintaining the gendered hierarchy of the arena also produced opportunities for more complex articulations of sexual difference. The female martyr who is both unexpectedly masculinized and hurriedly feminized becomes a site of complex identifications.

¹³ Cobb, *Dying to Be Men*, 122–123.

¹⁴ Burrus, "Torture and Travail," 56.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 70–71.

I believe the *First Apocalypse of James* can offer new insights to this debate. First, as I will show, *IApocJas* features an exhortation to James that he imitate the example of female disciples and martyrs. This process by which a male Christian takes on a female martyr as moral exemplar seems to embody precisely the “ambiguous” identification that Burrus suggests. Further, the extended discussion of the category of “femaleness” suggests a deeper and more direct engagement with questions of sexual difference than most of the traditional martyrdom texts. Within these theological discourses, *IApocJas* develops multiple overlapping methods for authorizing female martyrs. These methods do not simply reduce to masculinizing or feminizing the martyr. Rather, the text seeks out different articulations of sexual difference which can authorize a set of female martyrs as moral exemplars. I will ask, by what logic do these articulations of sexual difference work? What resources do they draw upon to articulate these improvisational visions of sexual difference?

Given that *IApocJas* offers a rich discussion of martyrdom and sexual difference, why has it been so little studied within these scholarly discussions? This is partly a function of the manuscript evidence. There are only two extant versions of the text, and one of them, from the Tchacos Codex, was published only in 2007.¹⁶ While the other, from Nag Hammadi Codex V, had been available for decades, a number of the most important passages on sexual difference found in the TC version of *IApocJas* are riddled with lacunae in their NHC V parallels.¹⁷ The publication of the Tchacos Codex, then, opens up new opportunities to bring *IApocJas* to bear on scholarly discussions of martyrdom and sexual difference. In addition, I argue that *IApocJas*

¹⁶ For the full narrative of the Tchacos Codex’ path to publication, see Herbert Krosney, *The Lost Gospel: The Quest for the Gospel of Judas Iscariot* (Washington, D.C.: National Geographic, 2006). The edited codex was published as Kasser and Wurst, eds, *The Gospel of Judas: Critical Edition*.

¹⁷ Compare for example TC 25.17–29.15 and NHC V 39.15–43.19.

has rarely been discussed in these scholarly discussions due to the lasting imprint of the discourse of heresy and orthodoxy.

The Discourse of Orthodoxy and Heresy

IApocJas has been commonly labeled by modern scholars as “Gnostic.” Such an appellation derives from an ancient discourse of orthodoxy and heresy. Early Christian leaders developed the category of “heresy” to distinguish between true and false Christians, and in so doing to draw the boundaries of normative Christianity.¹⁸ The use of such a power-laden category of approbation for historical analysis has consistently produced misleading and incomplete depictions of Christian history. Karen King’s genealogy of Gnosticism demonstrates that a certain incoherence in the category of “Gnosticism” is in fact essential to its use. “The discourse of orthodoxy and heresy has been employed to construe the relationship of Gnosticism and Christianity almost solely in terms of difference, and the relationship of widely varying so-called Gnostic materials in terms of similarity.”¹⁹ The purpose of “Gnosticism” within the discourse of orthodoxy and heresy was to lump together *unlike* things to provide an imagined other useful to self-definition. Scholarship which depends on the term “Gnostic” often undermines its own analysis by presuming the similarity of highly divergent ancient Christian materials.

One of the related problems produced by the modern deployment of the distinction between orthodoxy and heresy is the tendency to segregate “heretical” and “orthodox” materials.

¹⁸ Alain LeBoulluec, *Le Notion d’hérésie dans la littérature grecque II^e–III^e siècles* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1985).

¹⁹ Karen King, *What is Gnosticism?* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), 53. On the incoherence of scholarly categories of “Gnosticism,” see also Michael Williams, *Rethinking “Gnosticism”: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996).

The history of early Christianity has often been written based on a presumption that “Gnostic” was equivalent to non-Christian. Because *IApocJas* has been considered one of these heretical materials, it has often been excluded from discussions of martyrdom and sexual difference in early Christianity. In response, this dissertation aims to consider *IApocJas* outside of the framework of orthodoxy and heresy, locating it among comparands within a capacious category of ancient Christian materials. I do not categorize the text as “Gnostic,” and I will not be asking whether the text exhibits “orthodox” or “heretical” features. Instead, I will consider how *IApocJas* fits among ancient discourses and practices of martyrdom and sexual difference, drawing comparisons to Clement of Alexandria’s *Stromateis*, the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, and Heracleon, among many.

Before turning to discussion of martyrdom, I need to address one problematic ancient category which I do intend to use. A number of recent studies have proposed that Valentinianism remains a useful category for the study of ancient Christianity. The term itself is not without difficulty. There is little evidence of people who self-designated as “Valentinians,” and there remains significant scholarly debate as to the doctrine or practice of Valentinus himself, a Christian teacher who lived in Rome in the middle of the second century CE.²⁰ Einar Thomassen summarizes well the general scholarly argument for the continuing use of the term. “Nonetheless the movement possessed enough continuity, coherence, and specificity, and enough of a

²⁰ Christoph Marksches, *Valentinus Gnosticus? Untersuchungen zu valentinianischen Gnosis mit einem Kommentar zu den Fragmenten Valentin* (WUNT 65; Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck), 1992); Gilles Quispel, “The Original Doctrine of Valentinus the Gnostic,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 50.4 (1996), 327–352; Einar Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed: The Church of the “Valentinians”* (NHMS 60; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 417–429; Ismo Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism: Myth, Lifestyle, and Society in the School of Valentinus* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 35–74; Dunderberg, “The School of Valentinus,” in *A Companion to Second-Century Christian “Heretics”* (ed. Petri Luomanen and Antti Marjanen; Leiden: Brill, 2008), 64–99. Christoph Marksches has argued that the thought of the “Valentinians” bears little or no necessary relationship to the man Valentinus. Gilles Quispel argues by contrast for a close relation between Valentinus and the Valentinians. I prefer Ismo Dunderberg’s model, in which he does not presume to delineate Valentinianism in order to exclude Valentinus but understands takes the category as a historical construct to include the thought and practice of Valentinus and those who followed him.

historical relation to Valentinus, to make it possible to identify various groups as ‘Valentinians’ over a span of at least 250 years.”²¹ This coherence can be seen in the highly consistent set of texts which scholars identify as “Valentinian,” and the *First Apocalypse of James* appears among them in every case.²²

The discussions of “femaleness” in *IApocJas* build from questions about the relationship of oneness and plurality in the divine realms and how they first came to be. Such a structure of theology and protology locates the text within Valentinian theological discourse.²³ God, in *IApocJas* “the One Who Is,” is originally perfectly one (10.8–9), before the plurality of the divine realms develops. *IApocJas* uses “femaleness” to refer to the negative aspect of this plurality, a world somehow separated from the realms of the One Who Is (10.21–27). This negative aspect of plurality is balanced by a more positive understanding of multiple figures in the divine realms including Jesus (10.12–19) and Sophia (22.5–6). The text’s discourses on “femaleness” build from themes developed in Valentinian theology, and I will discuss them in relation to relevant Valentinian comparands. These shared patterns of thought, however, do not imply total equivalence between Valentinian texts. When *IApocJas* brings this theology to bear on discussions of martyrdom and sexual difference, it enters into a complex series of disputes in the ancient Mediterranean world. The text’s engagements with martyrdom discourse, for

²¹ Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed*, 5. See also Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism*, 2–10; Philip Tite, *Valentinian Ethics and Paraenetic Discourse: Determining the Social Function of Moral Exhortation in Valentinian Christianity* (NHMS 67; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 7–14. Karen King notes the relative coherence and consistency of the category of “Valentinianism,” in contrast to “Gnosticism.” King, *What is Gnosticism?*, 154–162.

²² Michel R. Desjardins, *Sin in Valentinianism* (SBLDS 108; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 5–7; Thomassen, “Notes pour la delimitation d’un corpus valentinien à Nag Hammadi,” in *Les Textes des Nag Hammadi et le problème de leur classification* (ed. Louis Painchaud and Anne Pasquier; BCNH:E 3; Québec: Les Presses de l’Université Laval, 1995), 243–263; Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism*, 7–10; Tite, *Valentinian Ethics and Paraenetic Discourse*, 14–17.

²³ For the best summary of the unity and diversity of Valentinian thought, see Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed*.

instance, can only be understood by comparison to a wide range of materials, both Valentinian and non-Valentinian.

Martyrdom

At first read, *I Apoc Jas* seems straightforwardly a text about martyrdom. It concludes with the death of James by stoning. James' death is one of the paradigmatic early Christian martyrdom stories, which was told and re-told variously through the first centuries.²⁴ Further, the text clearly narrates James' progress in preparation for martyrdom. Jesus tells James, "You are ignorant concerning yourself" (ΚΟ ΔΕ ΝΑΤΣΟΟΥΝΕ ΕΡΟΚ; 10.6), and he urges James not to fear (NHC V 25.13). By the conclusion of the dialogue, James is no longer fearful, and he proclaims proudly, "I have come to believe all these things, and they are properly within what is in my soul" (ΔΕΙΡ [ΠΙ]ΣΤΕΥΕ ΕΝΔΙ ΤΗΡΟΥ ΔΥΩ ΔΥΖΝ [ΠΙ]ΕΤΖΝ ΤΑΨΥΧΗ ΚΑΛΩC; 25.15–17).²⁵ He learns true knowledge, he conquers his fear, and he can become a martyr.

At the same time, no martyrdom is straightforward. No death, not even a violent death, constitutes martyrdom in itself. Martyrdom cannot occur as bare fact. It is an interpretation of

²⁴ Shelly Mathews, *Perfect Martyr* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 79–97. Mathews argues convincingly that the martyrdom of Stephen in *Acts* 7–8 should be read as an appropriation of the narrative of James' death. Christians most often mobilized the narratives of the death of James toward constructing a radical break between Jews and Christians, but a counter-narrative can be read in the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* 1.27–71. For comparison of the accounts of James' death, with particular consideration given to the long excerpt of Hegesippus in Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History* 2.23.4–18, see Wilhelm Pratscher, *Der Herrenbruder Jakobus und die Jakobustradition* (FRLANT 139; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987), 103–109; F. Stanley Jones, "The Martyrdom of James in Hegesippus, Clement of Alexandria, Christian Apocrypha, including Nag Hammadi: A Study of the Textual Relations," in *SBL Seminar Papers, 1990* (SBLSP 29; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 322–335; Richard Bauckham, "For What Offense Was James Put to Death?" in *James the Just and Christian Origins* (eds. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans; SNT 98; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 199–218; John Painter, *Just James: The Brother of Jesus in History and Tradition* (Columbia, S.C.: The University of South Carolina Press, 2004), 118–131, 188–198. On the historical question of James' death, scholars broadly agree that the narrative in Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 20.199–203 is more likely reliable, while Hegesippus builds a legendary narrative through the literalizing of early Christian metaphors about James' piety. For a well-considered evaluation of what constitutes historical reliability in relation to Josephus, see Mathews, 96–97.

²⁵ NHC V 38.12–15 is mostly lost, but what remains, ΔΥΩ CΕΩΘΟΠ Κ. ... ΤΑΨΥΧΗ, agrees with the TC version.

events for which argument is required. To analyze martyrdom, one must place it among the various discussions and contestations from which the understanding of certain deaths as martyrdoms emerged. As Daniel Boyarin puts it:

For the “Romans,” it didn’t matter much whether the lions were eating a robber or a bishop, and it probably didn’t make much of a difference to the lions, either, but the robber’s friends and the bishop’s friends told different stories about these leonine meals. It is in these stories that martyrdom, as opposed to execution or dinner, can be found, not in “what happened.”²⁶

Only from these stories can martyrdom emerge. A death becomes martyrdom, for some people at least, when it becomes an object of a certain kind of discourse. Arguments and the telling of stories produce the case for differentiating this particular violent death from others. I consider martyrdom as a “discourse” in the Foucauldian sense. “Discourse” in this sense does not simply refer to linguistic communication, but to “a field of strategic possibilities” with rules and values peculiar to it, enabled and constrained by cultural location.²⁷ The discourse of martyrdom, then, itself enables all these various positions attested in debates as to which deaths should be treated as true martyrdoms.

It is not surprising, then, that in the first centuries CE the discourse of martyrdom became closely bound up with another active set of disputes around orthodoxy and heresy. Martyrdom played a central role in contestations among Christians as to who embodied “true” or “false” Christianity. Tertullian in his *Scorpiace* identified Gnostics and Valentinians as “opponents of martyrdom.”²⁸ Irenaeus and Tertullian claimed that being martyred was a sign of orthodox, true

²⁶ Daniel Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Early Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 94–95.

²⁷ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge & The Discourse on Language* (trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith; New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 37.

²⁸ Tertullian, *Scorpiace* 1 (ANF 3.633). See also Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies*, 4.33.9. For the text of the *Scorpiace*, see August Reifferscheid and Georgi Wissowa, eds., *Quinti Septimi Florentis Tertulliani Opera* (CCSL;

Christianity. There has been a tradition in scholarship, likewise, to follow the heresiologists in considering “Gnostics” and the Valentinians to have rejected martyrdom. W. H. C. Frend argues that among the Gnostics, “the idea that martyrdom would bring the individual a reward was utterly rejected” because “persecution and martyrdom were in imitation of Christ’s Passion and physical suffering.”²⁹ Anyone who denied that Christ’s suffering occurred could not support martyrdom. According to Frend, martyrdom means a death suffused with particular theological meanings, and anyone who holds an opposing theological viewpoint cannot, by definition, support martyrdom.

If martyrdom is constituted through discourse and contestation, then it is important not to limit the definition of martyrdom according to the theological considerations that at times organized this discourse. As Karen King argues, definitions of martyrdom should not “presume any particular predetermination of the meaning of Jesus’ death or the deaths of his followers—for that is precisely what was at issue.”³⁰ I want to work with a capacious understanding of what might count as a martyr’s death. It is indeed martyrdom as a discourse that enables all of these different contestations of what constitutes a martyr’s death.

Turnholt: Brepols, 1972), 2:1067-1097. For the text of *Against the Heresies*, see Adelin Rousseau and Louis Doutrelou, eds., *Irénée de Lyon: Contre les hérésies* (SC 100; Paris: Cerf, 1965).

²⁹ W. H. C. Frend, “The Gnostic Sects and the Roman Empire,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 5.1 (1954), 31–33. Such assumptions about the nature of ancient martyrdom continue into the present. See, for example, Michael L. Budde’s claim that Christian martyrdom should be understood in terms of the “witness of the body,” wherein belief in the power and efficaciousness of Christ’s body is necessary for martyrdom. “The ‘body’ giving witness is the church, the new people formed by God as disciples of Christ, whose murdered and resurrected body is the paradigmatic witness of God’s love of and hope for the world.” Michael L. Budde, “Introduction,” in *Witness of the Body: The Past, Present, and Future of Christian Martyrdom* (eds. Michael L. Budde and Karen Scott; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2011), viii.

³⁰ Karen King, “Martyrdom and its Discontents in the Tchacos Codex,” in *The Codex Judas Papers: Proceedings of the International Conference on the Tchacos Codex held at Rice University, Houston, Texas, March 13–16, 2008* (ed. April DeConick; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 25.

Although I argue that martyrdom must be understood in terms of its discursive contestation, recent scholarship has urged a complementary consideration of martyrdom as practice. In his *Formations of the Secular*, Talal Asad offers a response to Judith Perkins' *The Suffering Self*, which I think can be taken as a response to much contemporary scholarly work on ancient Christian martyrdom. Asad notes that when Perkins talks about martyrdom, she turns quickly to discuss the symbolic and political implications of martyrdom texts, especially the way they challenge the dominant values of the ruling classes in the Roman Empire. Asad suggests that another mode of analysis is possible. He proposes that scholars might consider instead how Christians and others, faced with the risks of persecution and death, produced a "new economy of action" based on the endurance of suffering.³¹ This critique does not claim that martyrdom can be dissociated from disputation and argument. Rather, Asad argues that the purpose and effects of the discourse around martyrdom exceed symbolic and political contestation. Some recent scholarship has indeed considered how the discourse surrounding martyrdom both enabled and was structured by a set of practices which enabled people to submit to and endure suffering. Nicole Kelley proposes that early Christian martyr acts may be read as "instruments of discipline," by which ancient readers trained themselves as potential martyrs.³² The study of "preparation for martyrdom" thus focuses on how texts shaped by martyrdom discourse could produce such a new practical economy.

As I have mentioned, *IApocJas* narrates James' progression from fear and ignorance to confidence in anticipating martyrdom. The text's structure, then, serves to exhort preparation for

³¹ Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003), 85–87. Asad engages here with the arguments in Judith Perkins, *The Suffering Self: Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 104–123.

³² Nicole Kelley, "Philosophy as Training for Death: Reading the Ancient Christian Martyr Acts as Spiritual Exercises," *Church History* 75:4 (2006), 731. See also King, "Martyrdom and its Discontents."

martyrdom from readers and hearers who identify with James. I will ask how precisely *IApocJas* imagines that preparation for martyrdom works—what are the practices one is to undertake, and what mechanism makes these practices effective in producing ethical transformation? James prepares for martyrdom primarily by inculcating knowledge about the divine realms and about femaleness. I will consider how this knowledge serves purposes of producing a new economy of action. At the same time, by focusing so deeply on the revelation which James receives, *IApocJas* narrates a martyrdom which focuses far more on the transmission of knowledge than on the testing and trial of the hero martyr. I will consider within the ancient discourse of martyrdom how this non-standard martyrdom account engages with the question of who counts as a true martyr.

As such, I do not see a contradiction between reading texts about martyrdom for evidence of the practical economy they exhort as well as for evidence of discursive contestation. As a philosophical matter, “discourse” and “practice” should not be understood as opposed or strictly separate things. Rather, the strategic possibilities enabled and constrained by discourse include statements, practices, and actions that blur any definite line between “discourse” and “practice.” In Foucault’s later discussions of discourse, he makes clear that so-called non-discursive practices are typically embedded within fields of strategic possibility.³³ I understand discourse not only as the set of things that one might say or do, but as a set of changing and changeable rules which allow certain practices and statements and which locate those practices and statements within structures of power, enabling and constraining possibilities for strategic action.

³³ Michel Foucault, “The Confession of the Flesh,” in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977* (ed. and trans. Colin Gordon; New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 196–198. This is foreshadowed in the discussion in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* about the “materiality” of the statement—all the statements which make up discourse must be located in particular times and places, with particular bodies. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge & The Discourse on Language* (trans. A.M. Sheridan; New York: Pantheon, 1972), 100–102.

The discourse and practice of martyrdom, then, can be imagined as a relatively structured set of contestations about what sorts of suffering and death count as martyrdom and in what ways, and a relatively structured set of practices enabling new sorts of actions in light of the possibility of persecution and death.

Foucault's conclusion, in this restatement of his theory of discourse, significantly resembles Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice. The key idea in Bourdieu's theory is the notion of the *habitus*, an embodied capacity that structures practice based on the social structures by which it is formed.

The structures constitutive of a particular type of environment (e.g. the material conditions of existence characteristic of a class condition) produce *habitus*, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively 'regulated' and 'regular' without in any way being the product of obedience to rules.³⁴

The field of strategic possibilities which Foucault sees as the structuring location of discourse is matched in Bourdieu with the principles of the generation of practices that lay out the possible set of practices in a given context. Because I am dealing with mostly textual, explicitly discursive evidence in this dissertation, I find it more useful to talk about "discourse and practice," even though one could argue that Foucault's "discourse" includes "practice" and Bourdieu's "practice" is "discursive." Further, although discourse and practice cannot be entirely disentangled historically, people have a general sense of their distinctiveness, and I think it is important to emphasize that martyrdom is both discourse and practice.

³⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (trans. Richard Nice; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 72.

Sexual Difference

Along with martyrdom, I will take sexual difference as the second major category of analysis for this dissertation. I use the term “sexual difference” to refer to differentiations along the lines of male and female, maleness and femaleness, and masculinity and femininity. This terminology allows me to bracket the question of the applicability of modern categories of sex, gender, and sexuality to antiquity. I bracket the categories of sex and gender not because ancients did not have various methods of differentiating people, but because all forms of sexual difference may not be treated equivalently. I talk about “sexual difference” because modern categories of sex, gender, and sexuality map quite poorly to ancient articulations of sexual difference.

Thomas Laqueur’s *Making Sex* argues that ancients did not understand male and female as a positional dualism, by which people and bodies are strictly classified as either male or female. Rather, according to Laqueur, a notion of a “one-sex body” as a model for sexual difference prevailed around the ancient Mediterranean. The one-sex body should be understood as a broad spectrum, with male and female, masculine and feminine on opposite ends. Many people would be categorized in between the two extremes, and even for those who were seen as standing at one or the other end of the spectrum, the possibility or risk of sliding up or down the scale always remained open. What to modern understanding are commonly taken as simply different structures arising from chromosomal differences were in antiquity allocated according to a hierarchy of warm and cool, perfected and lacking. Bodily difference, then, was imagined differently.³⁵

³⁵ Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990), 25–29. Laqueur cites Galen, *On the Usefulness of Parts* 2.630. Laqueur’s model has been critiqued by historians of science, in particular for privileging the Galenic and Aristotelian models of sexual difference over the Hippocratic. See Katharine Park and Robert A. Nye, “Destiny Is Anatomy, Review of Laqueur’s *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*,” *New Republic* (September 18, 1991), 53–57; Rebecca Fleming, *Medicine and the Making of Roman Women: Gender, Nature, and Authority from Celsus to Galen* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). As I will argue, Laqueur’s model risks oversimplifying the wide array of

This understanding of sexual difference does not merely concern bodies but also social and political hierarchies. The subordinate qualities of women's bodies—their lack of warmth, their weakness and dampness—are expressed in their anatomy and reflect the proper social order. Laqueur turns to Aristotle to explain more precisely how the one-sex body functioned in antiquity. He notes that for Aristotle, the overriding issue in discussion of sexual difference was a distinction at the level of causation, in which the male represented the formal cause and the female the material. This hierarchy was defended by reference to the social order.

What we take to be ideologically charged social constructions of gender—that males are active and females passive, males contribute the form and females the matter to generation—were for Aristotle indubitable facts, “natural” truths. What we would take to be the basic facts of sexual difference, on the other hand—that males have a penis and females a vagina, males have testicles and females ovaries, females have a womb and males do not, males produce one kind of germinal product and females another, that women menstruate and men do not—were for Aristotle contingent and not very interesting observations about particular species under certain conditions.³⁶

Under a common modern understanding of sex and gender, these terms refer, respectively, to unchangeable biological difference between binary positions of male and female, and changeable cultural difference on a spectrum of masculine and feminine. Laqueur's “one-sex body” upsets the distinction. The sorts of biological differences that would constitute “sex,” in the modern understanding, were in antiquity not understood as discrete and binary, nor as fixed and unchangeable. The truly fixed, true facts of sexual difference were instead the location of men and women in the social order, and the ways in which their proper places in social organization reflect deeper truths about the causes of being.

articulations of sexual difference possible in antiquity. For summarizing the particular way in which male superiority was presumed in the dominant ancient schema of sexual difference, Laqueur's model remains highly useful. On the distinct vision of female difference in the Hippocratic corpus, see Helen King, *Hippocrates' Woman: Reading the Female Body in Ancient Greece* (New York: Routledge), 1998.

³⁶ Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 28–29, commenting primarily on Aristotle, *On the Generation of Animals* 2.

Laqueur takes this apparent reversal of modern notions of the fixity of sex and the fluidity of gender to argue, in his introduction, that in antiquity, “sex, or the body, must be understood as the epiphenomenon, while gender, what we would take to be a cultural category, was primary or ‘real.’”³⁷ Laqueur’s work usefully destabilizes any attempt to take modern notions of sex and gender uncritically into the study of antiquity, and I believe that his own study challenges the applicability of categories of sex and gender in this statement, even in reversed order. He means that, for these ancient writers, social differences are the unchangeable ground by which people may be differentiated, and from which bodily difference logically follows. The social differences to which he refers, though, were not understood as binary or discrete, but fell along a spectrum of relative differences. The body, which is epiphenomenal, is not sexually differentiated in a manner analogous to modern notions of sex. The categories of sex and gender, which Laqueur brings up here, risk obfuscating the insights he offers about the different articulations of sexual difference in antiquity.

What is needed, then, is a set of questions for reading ancient sources which neither presume the utility of categories of sex, gender, and sexuality, nor presume that unitary or univocal models of articulating sexual difference prevailed in antiquity. The category of “sexual difference” is perhaps best known from the work of Luce Irigaray. For Irigaray, “sexual difference” marks what is unrepresentable in philosophical and psychoanalytic discourse, the other of the phallogocentric subject which is necessary to the functioning of this discourse but cannot be represented within its structures. If discourse is “phallogocentric”—that is, the assumed subject position is the rational male, the one who is marked by both *phallos* and *logos*—then the other of this discourse is woman in her absolute difference. The sexual

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

difference which Irigaray identifies in philosophical and psychoanalytic discourse is not and can never be thought as complementary.

In fact, of course, these two terms cannot be fittingly designated by the number ‘two’ and the adjective ‘different,’ if only because they are not subject to comparison. To use such terms serves only to reiterate a movement begun long since, that is, the movement to speak of the ‘other’ in a language already systematized by/for the same.³⁸

Irigaray hesitates here even to call sexual difference a “difference” because this difference grounds the economy of sexual sameness. Sexual difference stands for the distinction between the sameness which discourse reproduces and the unrepresentable other which grounds discourse.

The risk which is run by Irigaray’s all-pervasive notion of sexual difference is that, as Amy Hollywood points out, a discussion of the complexity of human sexual difference which relies on “a slide between sex difference, subjective formation as sexed/gendered, and sexuality” may conflate these various aspects of difference into a monolith.³⁹ Laqueur’s map of maleness and femaleness in antiquity runs a similar risk. By positing social hierarchies as eternally fixed in the ancient understanding, he suggests that a unitary, oppressive hierarchy of culturally determined sexual difference can be mapped on a single line and identified in a single way throughout ancient thought and practice.

I want to take “sexual difference” not as a category which allows us to ignore the various, overlapping, and contradictory axes along which difference can be mapped. Laqueur and Irigaray both risk falling into this trap, but their work also opens up more fruitful possibilities. I consider sexual difference as a category which leaves open exactly what those different axes may be and

³⁸ Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman* (trans. Gillian C. Gill; Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985), 139.

³⁹ Amy Hollywood, *Sensible Ecstasy: Mysticism, Sexual Difference, and the Demands of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 284.

how they are related. Judith Butler's essay, "The End of Sexual Difference?" responds to a variety of feminist philosophers who have taken up "sexual difference" and rejected the category of "gender."⁴⁰ Butler highlights, "a problem that sexual difference poses, namely, the permanent difficulty of determining where the biological, the psychic, the discursive, the social begin and end."⁴¹ The category, then, can be taken not as a refusal to consider the question of the forms of sexual differentiation, but instead as a constant, pressing demand to find new and better articulations of the variety of sexual differentiation. As Butler puts it with regard just to questions of sex and gender, "sexual difference is the site where a question concerning the relation of the biological to the cultural is posed and reposed, where it must and can be posed, but where it cannot, strictly speaking, be answered."⁴²

I will continue to pose this question, and the goal of the dissertation is to lay out with precision and care the complex possibilities raised in one important ancient consideration of sexual difference. *IApocJas* lays out its theology in sexually differentiated terms, with "femaleness" playing a central though unhappy role. At the same time, the text seeks a theological basis to honor female martyrs and exhorts readers and hearers to imitate their example in preparation for martyrdom. Each of these overlapping efforts maps sexual difference in its own way, according to distinct goals. I propose to use the question of sexual difference not to collapse these articulations together, but to seek to piece them apart.

⁴⁰ For these arguments, see Rosie Braidotti, *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002); Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1994).

⁴¹ Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 185.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 186.

Manuscript and Dating

Locating *IApocJas* within early Christian discourse on sexual difference first requires positioning *IApocJas* more precisely within its historical context. As discussed, two extant versions of the *First Apocalypse of James* have been published, one from the fifth of the Nag Hammadi codices and one from the Tchacos Codex.⁴³ The NHC V version runs twenty manuscript pages, of which the final ten are missing many lines at the top and bottom of each page. The TC version is 21 pages with major lacunae only in the last two pages and the third through fifth pages.⁴⁴ Although both versions of *IApocJas* are found in Coptic,⁴⁵ scholars have

⁴³ Interestingly enough, neither of these versions of the text is actually titled “The First Apocalypse of James.” The subscript in the Tchacos Codex is titled simply “James” (ἸΑΚΚΩΒΟΣ; 30.28). NHC V has a subscript which reads, “The Apocalypse of James” (ΤΑΠΙΟΚΑΛΥΨΤΙC] ΝἸΑΚΩ[ΒΟΣ]; 44.9–10). The name “The First Apocalypse of James” was given first by Alexander Böhlig and Pahor Labib in their discussion of the text. This name distinguishes *IApocJas* from the text which follows it in Codex V, which has an identical superscript title (ΤΑΠΙΟΚΑΛΥΨΤΙC] ΝἸΑ[ΚΩΒΟΣ]; 44.11–12). The preceding text came to be known as the *First Apocalypse of James*, and the subsequent text as the *Second Apocalypse of James*. The naming does not refer to any imagined connection between the two apocalypses beyond their placement in the codex. Alexander Böhlig and Pahor Labib, *Koptisch-gnostische Apokalypsen aus Codex V von Nag Hammadi im Koptischen Museum zu Alt-Kairo* (Halle-Wittenburg: Martin-Luther-Universität, 1963), 29–54; S. Kent Brown, “James: A Religio-Historical Study of the Relations between Jewish, Gnostic, and Catholic Christianity in the Early Period through an Investigation of the Traditions about James the Lord’s Brother,” (PhD diss., Brown University, 1972), 267–278; Charles Hedrick, “The (Second) Apocalypse of James,” in *Nag Hammadi Codices V, 2–5 and VI*, 105–109; William R. Schoedel, “The (First) Apocalypse of James,” 65–67. The *Second Apocalypse of James* does include a revelation discourse between James and Jesus, but it spends much more time on the trial, judgment, and death of James. There has been no support for hypotheses of close textual relationship between the apocalypses. Brown further rejects of any kind of source relationship between these texts, based specifically their stories of the death of James.

⁴⁴ For codicological analysis of NHC V, see James Robinson, “Codicological Analysis of Nag Hammadi Codices V and VI and Papyrus Berolinensis 8502,” in *Nag Hammadi Codices V, 2–5 and VI*, 9–45. For TC, see Gregor Wurst, “Preliminary Codicological Analysis of Codex Tchacos,” in *The Gospel of Judas: Critical Edition*, 27–33. A new cache of fragments of the Tchacos Codex were recently recovered, and it is hoped that many remaining lacunae will eventually be filled. The work is apparently facing delays, and I do not expect any major reconstructions to be published before my dissertation is complete.

⁴⁵ Wolf-Peter Funk, “The Linguistic Aspect of Classifying the Nag Hammadi Codices,” in Painchaud and Pasquier, *Les Textes des Nag Hammadi*, 140–141; Byung Woo Yoo, “Die Erste Apokalypse des Jakobus (Nag Hammadi-Codex V,3), neu herausgegeben, übersetzt und erklärt,” (Diss. Theol., Humboldt-Universität, 1998), 6–21; Rodolphe Kasser, “Étude dialectale,” in *The Gospel of Judas: Critical Edition*, 35–36. In both the Nag Hammadi and Tchacos Codex versions of *IApocJas*, the language resembles most closely the Sahidic dialect of Coptic. In both cases, the Coptic does not comport in all ways with the scholarly model of classical Sahidic but includes dialectal variations. For the Tchacos Codex, Rodolphe Kasser has argued that the Sahidic of the text is influenced by Middle Egyptian Coptic dialects. For Nag Hammadi Codex V, both Wolf-Peter Funk and Byung Woo Yoo classify the dialect as Sahidic with Northern or Lower Egyptian features. Yoo suggests that the original form of the text may

concluded that NHC V was probably a translation from Greek and that the same is likely true of the Tchacos Codex.⁴⁶ The two Coptic versions show no signs of dependency, either from one to the other.⁴⁷ Given that a source-critical history cannot be determined, I propose to treat the TC and NHC V versions of the text equally as evidence of the *First Apocalypse of James*, even at moments where variant readings emerge.

My method here resembles Karen King's proposal to treat the variants of the *Apocryphon of John* as historical evidence of the text's tradition. She writes, "The variants are valuable in and of themselves as witnesses to the history of Sethian Gnosticism, and they should not be discounted or erased in the process of seeking a hypothetical original text."⁴⁸ I treat the *First Apocalypse of James* as a text whose manuscript tradition preserves a number of variant readings, and I consider all variants equally relevant to the interpretation. I will generally follow the text as presented in the *Nag Hammadi Codex V, 2–5* and *Gospel of Judas* editions of Schoedel and Kasser/Wurst, respectively. In practice I follow the Tchacos Codex more often than Nag Hammadi Codex V simply because it is the better preserved of the two by a significant margin.

have been in a Lower Egyptian Bohairic dialect, but the transmission of the text in Upper Egypt gradually produced more and more Sahidic features.

⁴⁶ Gregor Wurst, "James" in *The Gospel of Judas: Critical Edition*, 116. As Wurst notes, the TC version offers good support for this conclusion, which already represented a scholarly consensus. In the Tchacos Codex, often Greco-Coptic vocatives (ἰακκωβε) appear in places where the NHC V has a Coptic vocative construction (ἰακκωβος). Compare, e.g., TC 10.2 and NHC V 24.13. This is suggestive evidence that the two versions represent divergent practices of translating Greek vocatives.

⁴⁷ Johanna Brankaer and Hans-Gebhard Bethge, *Codex Tchacos: Texte und Analysen* (TU 161; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 83–84.

⁴⁸ Karen King, "Approaching the Variants of the *Apocryphon of John*," in *The Nag Hammadi Library after Fifty Years: Proceedings from the 1995 Society of Biblical Literature Commemoration* (eds. Anne McGuire and John D. Turner; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 137. For the further working-out of this method, see King, *The Secret Revelation of John* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), 244–257. On the identification and classification of "variants", see also Eldon Epp and Gordon Fee, *Studies in the Theory and Method of New Testament Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1993), 47–79.

In a few cases where I offer different readings, I will specify the difference and my reasons for offering a different reading.

The two physical copies of *IApocJas* provide the most direct evidence of the dating of the text. Based on analysis of the construction of the codex, scholars have dated NHC V most likely to the fourth or fifth century CE, possibly as late as the sixth.⁴⁹ The Tchacos Codex offers more useful data. The codex was subjected to close analysis by radiocarbon dating, electron microscopy and Raman spectrometry. These methods came to strikingly similar results. The first two suggested a date in the third or fourth century CE, the last suggested the third century was more likely than the fourth.⁵⁰ The dating of the codices provides a *terminus ad quem*. The *First Apocalypse of James* cannot be younger than its copies.

The results of this analysis of the Tchacos Codex help to confirm previous scholarly analysis, based only on evidence from NHC V, which dated the original composition in Greek of *IApocJas* to the late second or early third century CE. These analyses generally depended on identifying likely connections between *IApocJas* and contemporary texts.⁵¹ The two texts with the closest links to *IApocJas* both date from the latter half of the second century CE. First, a

⁴⁹ James D. Robinson, ed., *The Facsimile Edition of the Nag Hammadi Codices: Introduction* (vol. 1 of *The Facsimile Edition of the Nag Hammadi Codices*; Leiden: Brill, 1972), 71–86; John W.B. Barnes, Gerald M. Browne, and John C. Shelton, eds., *Nag Hammadi Codices: Greek and Coptic Papyri from the Cartonnage of the Covers* (Nag Hammadi Studies 16; Leiden: Brill, 1981); Stephen Emmel, “Religious Tradition, Textual Transmission, and the Nag Hammadi Codices,” in McGuire and Turner, *The Nag Hammadi Library after Fifty Years*, 34–43.

⁵⁰ Krosney, *The Lost Gospel*, 326–328. Radiocarbon testing of pieces of papyrus suggested they date from 220–340 CE. Transmission electron microscopy revealed the use of carbon black in the ink and gum in the binding, materials consistent with construction in the third or fourth century CE. Spectrometry identified the mix of pigments in the ink as more consistent with the third century CE than the fourth. For a fuller discussion of the methods used, as well as the evidence for the authentication of the Tchacos Codex, see Florence Darbre, “The Papyrus Codex Tchacos: Its Authentication, Conservation, and Future,” *PapierRestauration: Mitteilungen der IADA* 9.4 (2008), 19–25.

⁵¹ For scholarly arguments supporting this consensus dating, see F.T. Fallon, “The Gnostic Apocalypses,” *Semeia* 14 (1979), 133; Antti Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved: Mary Magdalene in the Nag Hammadi Library and Related Documents* (NHMS 40; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 126; Yoo, “Die Erste Apokalypse des Jakobus,” 21–22; Wolf-Peter Funk, “The First Apocalypse of James,” in *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures* (ed. Marvin Meyer; New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 322–323.

version of a passage from *IApocJas* (TC 20.10–21.18, NHC V 33.20–34.18) appears almost verbatim in Irenaeus’ *Against the Heresies* 1.21.5. In *IApocJas*, this passage comes in the midst of what I call the long revelation speech, a discourse by Jesus on the nature of the divine realms and human salvation which spans six manuscript pages.⁵² In this section, Jesus narrates an embedded dialogue. He tells James that he will be interrogated by heavenly powers, and he provides for James the words he can say to escape these captors.

[When] you fall because of (the) many, one of them will ask you, because he is a guard, “Who are you and where are you from?” You will say to him, “I am the son and I am from the father.” And he will say to you, “Which son and which father?” You will say to him, “The Father Who Is from the beginning and the son who is in the One Who Is from the beginning.” And he will say to you, “Where have you come from?” You will say to him, “From the One Who Is from the beginning.” And he will ask <you>, “Why have you come?” You will say, “I have come to all the ones who are mine and the ones who are not mine.” (20.7–21.18)

Irenaeus preserves an extremely similar passage which he attributes to an unspecified group of heretics.⁵³ He explains that they provide ritual instruction to dying members of their community, and this instruction is nearly identical to the answers which Jesus provides for James.

They instruct them that, after they have died, when they come to the powers, they are to speak as follows: “I am a son of Father, of Father who is preexisting. I am a son in the Preexisting one. I have come to see all things that belong to me and to others.”⁵⁴

⁵² For a brief outline of *IApocJas*, see the Appendix on page 153.

⁵³ This passage could be taken to refer specifically to Marcosians, but I do not believe that is the case. *Against the Heresies* 1.13–20 cover Marcus and the Marcosians, but in 1.22 Irenaeus has returned to more general statements about the “rule of faith” and the “refutation of all the heretical sects.” Irenaeus begins the last section of 1.20 by writing of the Marcosians’ scriptural interpretation, “Finally, as the highest proof, the crown of their system as it were, they introduce this text...” This seems to suggest that Irenaeus is completing his discussion of the Marcosians. In 1.21, he introduces the ritual of redemption and narrates a variety of quite different ideas and practices related to ritual practice. It seems much more likely to me that 1.21 treats a variety of rituals performed by folks whom Irenaeus considers to be heretics rather than the rituals specifically of the Marcosians. This textual parallel between *IApocJas* and a ritual attributed to unspecified heretics has often been cited as evidence that *IApocJas* is a “Gnostic” text.

⁵⁴ *AH* 1.21.5 (Unger).

Both the passage and its parallel continue for several more verses, but this quotation should be sufficient to demonstrate the nearly identical textual content.⁵⁵ The shared content, which is not attested by any other independent ancient texts, suggests historical proximity.

A second, less extensive parallel provides support for this dating hypothesis. Following the long revelation speech, and nearing the end of the dialogue, James asks a new question about Jesus' female disciples. "Who are the seven women who have become your disciples?" (ⲛⲓⲙ ⲛⲉ ⲧⲥⲗⲓⲥ ⲛⲥⲗⲓⲙⲉ ⲛⲧⲁⲣ ⲙⲁⲑⲏⲧⲉⲩⲉ ⲛⲉⲕ; 25.18–20).⁵⁶ Antti Marjanen points out that the *Sophia of Jesus Christ* is the only other text which preserves a tradition of Jesus having seven female disciples.⁵⁷ *SJC* begins with the scene-setting, "After he rose from the dead, when his twelve disciples and the seven women who were his disciples went up to Galilee..." (ⲙⲛⲛⲥⲁ ⲛⲧⲣⲉⲕⲧⲱⲟⲩ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲁⲛ ⲛⲉⲧⲙⲟⲟⲩⲧ ⲛⲧⲉⲣⲟⲩⲉⲓ ⲛⲉⲓ ⲛⲉⲕⲙⲏⲧⲥⲛⲟⲟⲩⲥ ⲛⲙⲁⲑⲏⲧⲏⲥ ⲙⲏ ⲥⲁⲱⲥ ⲛⲥⲗⲓⲙⲉ ⲉⲧⲉ ⲛⲉⲩⲙⲁⲑⲏⲧⲉⲩⲉ ⲛⲁⲕ ⲉⲣⲁⲓ ⲉⲧⲁⲗⲓⲗⲁⲓ; BG 77.9–77.16).⁵⁸ The Coptic is not exactly the same, but it is very close. Again, the exclusively shared tradition of seven women disciples suggests proximity between the texts.

These two textual parallels are not determinative arguments on their own, but they are useful when paired with the physical analysis of the Tchacos Codex. Scholars had previously

⁵⁵ For my analysis of this passage, see pages 44–49, 67–81, 101–107. For a setting of the two full passages in parallel, see Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed*, 406–408.

⁵⁶ Besides some minor differences in word order which do not change the basic sense, NHC V follows almost identically here. "Who are the [seven] women who have [become] your disciples?" (V 38.16–18; ⲧⲥⲗⲓⲥ ⲛⲥⲗⲓⲙⲉ ⲙⲁⲑⲏⲧⲉⲩⲉ ⲛⲓⲙ ⲛⲉ ⲛⲧⲁⲩⲓⲣ ⲙⲁⲓⲑⲏⲧⲏⲥ ⲛⲁⲕ).

⁵⁷ Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 126.

⁵⁸ There is another version of *The Sophia of Jesus Christ* in Nag Hammadi Codex III, which has essentially the same description of women disciples. It refers to "seven women being [his] disciples" (ⲥⲁⲱⲥ ⲛⲥⲗⲓⲙⲉ ⲙⲁⲑⲏⲧⲉⲩⲉ; III 90.16–17). Once again, the text identifies the women as disciples by using the Greco-Coptic verb ⲙⲁⲑⲏⲧⲉⲩⲉ. Douglas M. Parrott, ed., *Nag Hammadi Codices III,3–4 and V,1 with Papyrus Berolinensis 8502,3 and Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 1081* (Leiden: Brill, 1991).

dated *IApocJas* to the late second or early third century CE before the Tchacos Codex was discovered, based on these connections. The evidence from the analysis of the Tchacos Codex places the most likely date of the composition in Greek of *IApocJas* in the third century or earlier, confirming the earlier hypotheses of the work's dating. In my analysis, I will seek to locate *IApocJas* historically among ancient discourses and practices of martyrdom and sexual difference roughly in period of the late second and early third century CE.

Structure of the Dissertation

My discussion of sexual difference and martyrdom in the *First Apocalypse of James* begins by engaging the topic of martyrdom. The second chapter will read the *First Apocalypse of James* in terms of preparation for martyrdom. Jesus exhorts James, and by implication the readers and hearers of the text, to prepare for martyrdom through specific practices of inculcation of knowledge and ritual repetition. The rhetoric of the text works by presenting James at first uncertain in knowledge and fearful about his fate. Over the course of the narrative, he receives consolation and revelation until he is ready to face his fate without fear. I locate the text's exhortation of preparation for martyrdom within ancient moral philosophy, and in particular around the "practices of the self" identified by Michel Foucault.⁵⁹ Practices of the control of the passions, particularly fear, were commonly exhorted in ancient philosophical literature, and *IApocJas* fits among these ancient discussions and practices. The specific practices discussed in *IApocJas* involve training in the inculcation of knowledge through ritual repetition and dialogue. The knowledge which is inculcated is a specifically theological knowledge. One comes to understand that one's body is not the seat of the true self, and so harm done to the body in

⁵⁹ Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France 1981–1982* (ed. Frédéric Gros; trans. Graham Burchell; New York: Picador, 2001), 320–324.

martyrdom does not harm the soul or spirit of a person. The body, the text says, is a “type of the rulers,” and the rulers are secondary and inferior deities who were created by the secondary and inferior divine power “femaleness.” This training in knowledge enables the person to inculcate proper dispositions such that in a situation of persecution, she may act properly and without fear.

In the third chapter, I take up the question of scriptural interpretation in *1ApocJas*. The “embedded dialogue” passage which exhorts readers and hearers to practices of ritual repetition, I argue, was drawn from a reading of the *Gospel of John*. The reading of *John* presented here builds from gaps in the presentation of ethics and Christology in *John*. By this method, it finds in *John* a program for preparation for martyrdom. This reading helps to explain the passages on the seven women, which are highly complex and confusing. The text presents the seven women first as honored women, then as divine spirits who preceded Jesus, then as disciples of Jesus whom James is called to imitate, then as women for whom “the work of the female has attained to the male,” and finally as female martyrs. I argue that these passages are organized according to certain methods of reading scripture. Readings of *Isaiah* and *Leviticus* underlie the passages on the seven women, and once again the reading focuses on questions of ethics and Christology. Where with regard to *John* this reading method produced a relatively coherent interpretation, here the application of this method to new scriptural texts produces new difficulties. *1ApocJas* lays out moral exemplars and Christological knowledge found in *Isaiah* and *Leviticus* which can be useful for preparation for martyrdom, but it also effects a significant shift in the text’s logic of imitation. Where before Jesus was the primary moral exemplar, from this point forward the primary exemplars will be the seven women disciples.

The fourth chapter returns to the theological revelations and the question of sexual difference. I compare the structure of this theology to the *Excerpts from Theodotus* in order to

identify the particular play of oneness and plurality that organizes the theology. Both *IApocJas* and the *Excerpts* envision the difference between the positive and negative aspects of plurality by reference to the figure of Sophia. In both texts there are two Sophia figures, one higher and one lower. In *IApocJas*, “femaleness” produces a break in the unity of the divine realms, and human salvation can be achieved through reunification with the divine. This reunification is figured as triumph over femaleness and reabsorption into primal oneness, now apparently figured as male. At the same time, this theology honors the higher Sophia as a protective power in the divine realms. I consider here scholarship on sexual difference in the ancient Mediterranean world, in which theological, social and sexual hierarchies often paralleled. I note that while the narrative of “femaleness” seems to envision a reinstatement of a masculine ideal, the discussion of the higher Sophia challenges such a simple reading of sexual difference.

Building from this analysis of sexual difference in *IApocJas*’ theology, I consider in the fifth chapter the passage on Jesus’ seven women disciples. James asks Jesus about these women after he has received theological revelation. As Jesus seeks to explain how these women are blessed, he introduces new challenges for the text’s articulation of sexual difference. *IApocJas* seeks to authorize these female disciples and martyrs by way of a dual strategy drawn from the theology of the text. The seven women are associated with divine female figures such as Sophia and the spirits of prophecy, while at the same time, they are dissociated from “femaleness.” I argue that while these strategies could be considered “masculinizing” and “feminizing,” they are not in any way complementary strategies. Further, the association of the women with the higher Sophia does not serve any domesticating purpose. Whereas the move to authorize the women in terms of their triumph over femaleness suggests a perfected state of humanity characterized by a transformation to maleness, here the link drawn between the women martyrs and the higher

Sophia suggests in turn an imagined perfected female state toward which these women may aspire, without any particular denigration of maleness. In the case of both strategies, Jesus exhorts James to imitate this group of female disciples and martyrs, which introduces a further element of femininity into the practices of the self.

Chapter 2: Preparation for Martyrdom

The *First Apocalypse of James* ends with the execution of James. As the stones strike his body, James calls out in imitation of Christ on the cross, “Forgive them, for they do [not know] what they are doing” (κω ηαγ εβολ ηε[εχοογ]ηε γαρ [αν] ξε εγρ ογ; 30.25–26).¹ The self-controlled martyr who dies at the conclusion of the text resembles little the James whom one first encounters in *IApocJas*. James tells Jesus that he is afraid, and he requests revelation, seeking knowledge he does not possess. When informed that he must die, James weeps and has to steady himself by sitting down on a rock. But over the course of the text, as Jesus provides teaching and revelation, James wipes away his tears and grows progressively less terrified of his fate. Once James understands why he must die and what his death means, he ceases to be afraid. James’ progress culminates in his martyrdom.²

¹ Kasser and Wurst propose an emendation to place an enclitic negator αν in the sentence, to correct a hypothesized scribal error, and I follow this proposal. This line ought to be emended with αν because otherwise the construction ηε... γαρ does not work grammatically or contextually. The only other grammatically feasible option would be to take ηε as the third-person plural form of the conjunctive conjugation base, but then this clause would have to be taken as continuing a jussive, following “forgive them.” The other option, that is, would be to translate as “Forgive them, for, let them not know what they are doing.” Given that this option both makes little sense contextually and contains an inexplicable γαρ, I find the emendation justified. Further, the otherwise lacuna-ridden conclusion to the NHC V version does include γαρ αν precisely where it should appear in a parallel text (V 44.7–8). As Wolf-Peter Funk points out, a similar pattern of a dropped αν for negation appears in NHC V 28.10. Wolf-Peter Funk, “The Significance of the Tchacos Codex,” in DeConick, *The Codex Judas Papers*, 515–516.

² *IApocJas* has commonly, but not universally been read as a martyrdom text. The passage which narrates the death of James by stoning was missing from the Nag Hammadi Codex V version, and so it was possible to imagine that the text might have ended otherwise. Among readers who took *IApocJas* as a martyrdom narrative, see Brown, “James”; Elaine Pagels, “Gnostic and Orthodox Views of Christ’s Passion: Paradigms for the Christian’s Response to Persecution?” in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, Vol. 1. (ed. Bentley Layton; Leiden: Brill, 1980), 262–288; Clemens Scholten, *Martyrium und Sophiamythos im Gnostizismus nach den Texten von Nag Hammadi* (Münster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchh., 1987), 68–80; Painter, 168–173; Wolf-Peter Funk, “The First Apocalypse of James,” in *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures* (Marvin Meyer, ed.; New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 322–323. Two major commentaries on *IApocJas* written before the Tchacos Codex version was available question the importance of martyrdom in the text. Armand Vielleux states, “the concern of the author is not the martyrdom of James, but his authorization as a recipient of post-resurrection revelation.” Byung Woo Yoo hypothesized, from the very fragmentary conclusion to the NHC V version, that *IApocJas* ended not with James’ death, but with his continuing preaching of the revelation of the savior. Armand Vielleux, *Le deux apocalypses de Jacques* (BCNH:T 17 ; Québec: Presses de l’Université Laval, 1986), 97; Yoo, “Die Erste Apokalypse des Jakobus,” 220–221. Since the publication of the Tchacos Codex with its preserved narrative of the death of James, the central importance of martyrdom for the text has been the near-consensus position. See Brankaer and Bethge, *Codex Tchacos*; King, “Martyrdom and its

IApocJas thus narrates James' martyrdom and the instruction he receives in preparation for it. James asks questions and describes his mental and emotional state, and Jesus responds with instruction and encouragement. These dialogues between James and Jesus dominate the text, and only two narrative interludes break up the discussions. The structure of the text runs dialogue, narrative, dialogue, narrative.³ The first dialogue takes place before Jesus' crucifixion and the second during a post-resurrection appearance to James. In between these two dialogues there is a short narrative break during which Jesus is killed. Jesus returns afterward and imparts further instruction and encouragement in a second dialogue. After Jesus departs again, there is a fragmentary narrative of James' arrest, and the text concludes with his martyrdom by stoning. Rodolphe Kasser argues that the basic form of the text builds first to Jesus' death then in turn to James' martyrdom as its climax.⁴ Martyrdom is the dramatic event around which the literary structure of *IApocJas* is organized.

I read the literary structure of the text rhetorically. Its narrative depicts James' gradual transformation toward preparation for martyrdom in order to exhort readers and hearers to practices of preparation. In this interpretation, I follow a recent turn in martyrdom studies which considers the didactic function of martyrdom texts. Karen King explains that many martyrdom texts "took as [their] particular challenge to tell believers how to maintain their confession to be Christian even under torture and threat of death."⁵ These texts seek to form their readers and hearers as potential martyrs by advocating practices and beliefs which enable them to respond

Discontents in the Tchacos Codex," 23–42; Antti Marjanen, "The Seven Women Disciples: In the Two Versions of the *First Apocalypse of James*," in DeConick, *The Codex Judas Papers*, 535–546.

³ See Appendix on page 153 for an outline of the text of *IApocJas*.

⁴ Rodolphe Kasser, "Textes gnostiques. Nouvelle remarques à propos des apocalypses de Paul, Jacques et Adam," *Le Muséon* 78 (1965), 79.

⁵ King, "Martyrdom and its Discontents," 39.

properly to persecution. This shared goal and concern unites martyrdom texts of diverse generic forms, from explicit exhortations to martyrdom to narratives and dialogues.⁶ I will draw comparisons between *1ApocJas* and texts of different generic forms, based on an understanding of shared engagement in these discussions.

The notion of preparation for martyrdom is not new in itself. Some ancient Christian texts quite explicitly exhort the reader to prepare for martyrdom. Origen, in his *Exhortation to Martyrdom*, writes to a fellow Christian under arrest, “O that our soul might not be troubled, but that even before the judgment seats, before the swords ready to behead us, our soul be preserved by the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, and be tranquil in the thought that they that leave the body live with the Lord of all things.”⁷ The intended effect is to enable the reader to persevere under arrest and endure a martyr’s death. Recent scholarship on the preparation for martyrdom argues that it is not only these explicit exhortations to martyrdom that seek to shape potential martyrs. Martyrdom texts of various generic forms also may implicitly exhort such disciplined training.

Recent studies have drawn on Michel Foucault’s and Pierre Hadot’s work on “practices of the self” and “spiritual exercises,” respectively, to explain the disciplined training exhorted by martyrdom texts.⁸ Hadot argues that ancient philosophy should be understood in terms of

⁶ On the genres of martyrdom, see Hans R. Seeliger, “Martyrs, Acts of the,” in the *Dictionary of Early Christian Literature* (ed. Siegmund Döpp and Wilhelm Geerlings; trans. Matthew O’Connell; New York: Crossroad, 2000), 405–407. As Seeliger notes, many of these differences of genre were not elaborated until the late Medieval period, which I believe further supports this practice of reading various martyrdom texts together.

⁷ Origen, *Exhortation to Martyrdom* 4. Translation from Rowan A. Greer, trans., *Origen: An Exhortation to Martyrdom; On Prayer; First Principles: Book IV; Prologue to the Commentary on the Song of Songs; Homily XXVII on Numbers*. (New York: Paulist Press, 1979). For the Greek text of the *Exhortation*, see Maria-Barbara von Stritzky, ed. and trans., *Origenes: Aufforderung zum Martyrium* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2010).

⁸ Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*, 86; Kelley, “Philosophy as Training for Death;” King, “Martyrdom and its Discontents.” Elizabeth Castelli made use of Foucault’s notion of “practices of the self” to consider how a martyrdom text might reflect practices of preparation for martyrdom. Castelli argues that *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* is “a record of ascetic engagement, where disciplined practice and repetition generate a new identity

practices by which the self may be transformed.⁹ Foucault builds off Hadot's method of reading ancient philosophy and articulates a general program of historical research to investigate the "practices of the self."¹⁰ While I agree that these notions are useful for understanding martyrdom literature, their applicability requires some further elaboration. Foucault and Hadot often do not explain the imagined ends of these "practices of the self" and "spiritual exercises" in specific or practical terms. For a potential martyr, preparation for martyrdom involves preparing for a particular action in a particular setting—maintaining one's confession under arrest and threat of execution. I argued above that preparation for martyrdom involves the inculcation of bodily and intellectual dispositions. These dispositions structure future practice and enable potential martyrs to endure persecution and torture, even up to death.¹¹ It requires some discussion of how practices of the self may produce durable dispositions. I argue this understanding of preparation for martyrdom fits with the articulation of the "practices of the self" which Foucault offers in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*.

In these lectures, Foucault questions the importance of renunciation to ancient practices of the self. Practices of the self in antiquity aimed "to acquire something we do not have, rather

and integrate a new symbolic reality." Perpetua's practices of prayer, visionary experience, and interpretation enable her transformation into the confident martyr who responds "Christiana sum" even under penalty of death (6.4). This transformation is wide-ranging—bodily, religious, and social—and it is achieved through ascetic practice. While Castelli considers the text in terms of its "leaving a record" of this practice, I will consider how the narrative of discipline serves to exhort a similar disciplinary training among readers and hearers.

⁹ Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault* (trans. Michael Chase; New York: Blackwell, 1995), 83. Hadot argues regarding the various ancient philosophical schools, "[A]ll of them linked their therapeutics to a profound transformation of the individual's mode of seeing and being. The object of spiritual exercises is precisely to bring about this transformation."

¹⁰ Michel Foucault, "Technologies of the Self," in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth* (ed. Paul Rabinow; trans. Robert Hurley et al.; New York: New Press, 1994), 223–253. For the language of "practices of the self," I draw on the more in-depth treatment of ancient philosophy from his lecture series at the Collège de France in Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France 1981–1982* (ed. Frédéric Gros; trans. Graham Burchell; New York: Picador, 2001).

¹¹ See pages 14–15, citing Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 72.

than renounce this or that element of ourselves that we are or have.”¹² What is it that is acquired? Foucault draws on a discussion of training by the Cynic philosopher Demetrius, which is cited approvingly in Seneca’s *On Benefits*. As Foucault reads this passage, the philosophers argue that one trains in order to “prepar[e] the individual for the future, for a future of unforeseen events whose general nature may be familiar to us, but which we cannot know whether and when they will occur.”¹³ Practices of the self, then, ready a person for proper action in specific situations. To be able to act properly requires the learning and embodiment of “inductive schemas of action which, in their inductive value and effectiveness, are such that when present in the head, thoughts, heart, and even body of someone who possesses them, that person will then act as if spontaneously.”¹⁴ The training one has received, the philosophical discourses that have been studied and practiced, “are effectively inscribed in the subject as matrices of action.”¹⁵ These matrices of action structure future practice just as dispositions in Bourdieu’s sense. One acquires dispositions to react properly to situations which may be foreseen in part but never in whole.

This elaboration of the practices of the self in terms of their ends informs my understanding of the preparation for martyrdom. A person who has fully prepared for martyrdom has so well learned true teaching that it has been inscribed into his or her mind and body and will drive the potential martyr’s actions in the event of persecution. The entire person has been transformed, such that he or she will react to the threat of torture and death properly. In *1ApocJas*, this means one must act with certainty of knowledge and without fear. The text

¹² Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 320.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 320–321.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 323.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 324.

exhorts readers and hearers to train in order to control the passions, in particular the fear of death. Making use of a common set of connections in ancient moral philosophy, the text argues for practices of attainment of knowledge that enable the control of passions such as fear.¹⁶ These practices of attainment of knowledge include memorization and ritual recitation of theological truth to aid in its incorporation. Such practices are imagined to be effective because James learns that the aspect of his person which will suffer is only his flesh, which does not derive from the highest God and is not worthy of moral concern.¹⁷ If he truly accepts this knowledge, he will no longer fear. Through practices of discernment and training in knowledge, James inculcates dispositions that ready him to endure punishment in this world without fear and thus prepares for martyrdom. The text implicitly exhorts its readers and hearers to learn along with James, and in turn prepare for martyrdom.

James' Preparation for Martyrdom

I will first sketch the narrative arc of the text in order to show how the preparation for martyrdom provides a literary structure to the text. This sketch demonstrates also that *IApocJas* describes the preparation for martyrdom primarily in terms of acquisition of understanding and the control of feelings of fear and distress. These two themes are clearly linked, as James'

¹⁶ See Martha Nussbaum, "The Stoics on the Extirpation of the Passions," *Apeiron* 20 (1987), 122–177; Julia Annas, *Hellenistic Philosophy of Mind* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1992), esp. 103–120; Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994); Christopher Gill, "The Emotions in Greco-Roman Philosophy," in *The Passions in Roman Thought and Literature* (eds. Susanna Morton Braund and Christopher Gill; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 5–16; Juha Sihvola and Troels Engberg-Pederson, eds., *The Emotions in Hellenistic Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1998); Margaret Graver, *Cicero on the Emotions: Tusculan Disputations 3 & 4* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Gill, *The Structured Self in Hellenistic and Roman Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 207–324. For my project, I find Nussbaum's sustained focus on the practical therapeutic aspect of moral philosophy the most useful of the various texts in this discussion.

¹⁷ See King, "Martyrdom and its Discontents," 25–26. In this way, *IApocJas* combines two of the common strategies that Karen King identifies among preparation for martyrdom texts. King finds that exhortations to mastery of the passions and reminders of the "ephemeral" nature of bodily suffering appear regularly in these texts. In *IApocJas*, these two are combined via this articulation of anthropology and theology.

progress in understanding correlates almost perfectly with his ability to control his fear. In this section I will lay out in detail how these themes move through the text and connect this reading to the ancient understanding of ethics under which the themes would be inseparable. James displays his successful training at the moment of his death. While the people stone him, James intones, “forgive them, for they do [not know] what they are doing” (30.25–26). He shows neither fear nor distress, even as he is struck bodily by the stones and soon to die. James invokes his greater knowledge and states that his executioners do not understand the true meaning and effect of their actions. In *IApocJas*, the acquisition of knowledge is a disciplined practice which enables a student to manage passions of fear or distress.

The practical acquisition of understanding takes place over the course of the narrative. James regularly notes that he lacks knowledge and that he is afraid. *IApocJas* consistently associates fear with ignorance and courage with knowledge. The acquisition of knowledge drives away fear. In both cases, the relevant problem is martyrdom. James more specifically fears his potential death, his execution before the authorities. To conquer this fear, he requires a full understanding of the circumstances, meaning, and effects of martyrdom. James seeks to attain understanding in order that he may become unafraid that thus prepared for martyrdom.

The twin problems of ignorance and fear shape the first conversation between James and Jesus in the text. Jesus diagnoses James’ problem. “You are ignorant concerning yourself,” he says (ΚΟ ΔΕ ΝΑΤCΟΟΥΝΕ ΕΡΟΚ; 10.6).¹⁸ Thus he lays out the direction of this teaching—Jesus must bring James along in understanding until James sees who he truly is. Next, James voices his fear. Jesus has predicted his own death, and James asks, “if they arrest you, then what will I do?”

¹⁸ The NHC V differs here, reading instead, “I am not ignorant about you” (ΟΥΤΕ ΝΗΤΕ ΠΗΛΑΤΕΙΝΕ ΕΡΟΚ ΔΗ; 24.16–17). Both readings express central themes—Jesus’ knowledge and James’ lack of knowledge at the beginning of the dialogue. If this were the only mention in either the NHC or TC of James’ lack of knowledge, I might hesitate to cite a variant reading in just one version, but the theme of James’ ignorance and later his growing knowledge repeats through both versions of the text.

(ΕΦΩΠΕ CΕΝΑΜΑΖΤΕ ΠΗΟΚ ΖΪ[Ε Α]ΝΟΚ ΟΥ ΠΕΤΗΑΑΑΑ; 11.18–19). The connection between ignorance and fear can be seen here—James is afraid precisely because he does not know what to do. If he knew what he ought to do in the eventuality of Jesus’ arrest and execution, he would not be afraid and he would not be driven to ask this question. Jesus responds by consoling James. In the Tchacos Codex text, his consolation is, somewhat confusingly, prefaced with a prediction of James’ death. “When they arrest you and stone you, you will be saved” (ΖΟΤΑΝ ΕΥΘΑΝΑΜΑΖΤΕ ΠΗΟΚ ΑΥΩ ΠCΕΖΙ ΩΝΕ ΕΡΟΚ ΕΚΝΑCΩΤΕ; 11.20–23). Jesus seems to be suggesting that James ought not be afraid because these deaths are not negative events, but instead they are somehow salvific. The Nag Hammadi version more explicitly acknowledges James’ fear. Jesus exhorts, “don’t fear, James, you too will be arrested” (ΠΠΠΠ ΖΟΤΕ ΙΑΚΩΒΟC ΠΤΑΚ ΖΩΩΚ CΕΝΑΜΑΖΤΕ; NHC V 25.13–14). Following this exchange, Jesus provides a revelation speech to give James at least some of the knowledge he needs to be prepared to act properly after Jesus’ death. The didactic style and strategies of the dialogue can be seen here in outline. Jesus uses a double therapy to treat fear and ignorance. He first offers consolation to moderate fear, and then he provides revelation to enable understanding, which serves in turn to eliminate fear.

After this first revelation speech, James and Jesus again discuss James’ state of preparation in a short exchange. Regarding his fear, he says, “I am not concerned about the tortures that are in this place, [but] because of their rule” (ΑΥ[Ω] ΝCΜΕΛΕ[Ι] ΗΔΙ ΑΝ [Ζ]Α ΠΒΑCΑΝ[Ο]C ΕΤΖΠ ΠΕΕΙΜΑ [ΑΑΑΑ] ΕΤΒΕ [Π]ΕΥΑΜΑΖ[ΤΕ]; 15.13–15).¹⁹ Jesus responds, “I praise your understanding, and fear is making you a sufferer” (ΤΠ ΕΠΑΙΝΟΥ ΗΠΙΕΚΖΗΤ ΑΥΩ ΘΟΤΕ ΕΙΡΕ

¹⁹ This passage is quite fragmentary from the NHC V version, but what is preserved confirms the sense here, and again makes more explicit the theme of James’ fear. “But I have become afraid ... [because?] they rule” (ΑΑΑΑ ΑΕΙΠ ΖΟΤΕ [...] ΕΥΑΜ[ΑΖ]ΤΕ; NHC V 28.29–30).

ἡΜΟΚ ἡΜΑΪΖΙCΕ; 15.18–20).²⁰ James, through that first revelation speech, has gained some level of understanding. However, Jesus acknowledges compassionately that the thought of the ruling powers still provokes fear in James. It seems that James has not yet fully incorporated the knowledge which he has received.

At this point, with James having achieved only a part of the preparation he needs, Jesus tells James that he is leaving. Even though he will die, Jesus explains, he will then return. Jesus departs and is arrested and killed. James’ response, in a short narrative interlude before Jesus reappears, reflects his in-between state. “James heard about [Jesus’] sufferings, and he was deeply distressed and waited for his coming. It was this alone that he had to console himself” (ἰΑΚΚΩΒΟC ΔΕ ΑΔCΩΤῼ ΕΝΕΔΖΙCΕ ΑΥΩ ΑΔΛΥΠΕΙ ΜΠΩΑ ΑΥΩ ΑΔCΩΜΝΤ̄ ΕΒΟΛ ΟΥΒΕ ΠΕΔΕΙ ΜΟΝΟΝ ΔΕ ΠΑΙ Μ[Α]ΟΥΑΑΔ ΠΕΤΕΟΥΝΤΑΔC̄ ἡΜΑ[Υ Ε]CΟΛC̄ ἡΖΗΤC̄; 16.27–17.4). The fear and distress, reflecting ignorance, are still present. But he knows Jesus will return, and that provides some kind of consolation.

Upon returning, Jesus foretells James’ death again. This shock reveals James’ remaining fear and ignorance. “Being afraid, James wept and was deeply distressed” (ἰΑΚΚΩΒΟC ΔΕ ΕΥΔΑΒΙΖΗΤ ΠΕ [ΑΔΡΙ]ΜΕ ΑΥΩ ΑΔΛΥΠΙ ἡΠΩΑ; 19.7–8). Fear and suffering take him so fully that for the first time in the text, James is unable to respond verbally. He has to sit down. Once again, when confronted by his student’s fear and ignorance, Jesus’ teaching strategy is a combination of consolation and imparting knowledge. First, Jesus exhorts James, “As for you, do not be afraid, and fear nothing” (ἡΤΟΚ ΔΕ ΜΠΡΩΩΠΕ ἡΔΑΒΙΖΗΤ ΑΥΩ ἡΠΡ̄P̄ ΖΟΤΕ ΛΑΟΥ; 19.15–16). Next, he embarks on the longest revelation speech in *IApocJas*, which takes up six manuscript pages of

²⁰ The NHC V version is somewhat confusing at this point, as Jesus states, “I praise your understanding and your fear” (†ΤΗΔΕΙΟ ἡΤΕΚΛΙΑΝΟΙΑ ἡἡ ΤΕΚΖΟΤΕ; NHC V 29.4–5). The praise of fear is incongruous given the typical use of the term in the text. I think the TC may help explain this strange verse. James’ fear has led him to be concerned about the power of the rulers, and as I will argue, this is the proper perspective to take on events in the world.

the twenty in the Tchacos Codex text. Both of these efforts have their intended effects. Receiving Jesus' consolation, James' fear is assuaged. "When he heard this," *IApocJas* reports, "he wiped his tears away and was greatly relieved from the pain within him" (αὐβῶτε ἐβόλῃ ἡνέκρηται ἰοοῦν ἄγω ἀφ' ἑσέ ἡπῶα ἐβόλῃ 2ῆ τὰ γινῆ ἐτῆρηται; 19.18–21). This new state of courage is maintained as James takes on this revealed knowledge. After Jesus' long revelation speech, James responds confidently, "I have come to believe these things, and they are properly within what is in my soul" (ἀεὶ [π]ιστεύε ἐναὶ τῆροῦ ἄγω ἄγ2ῆ [π]ετ2ῆ τὰ ἴγχη καλῶς; 25.15–17). James continues to ask questions and seek further instruction, but he never again displays the sort of fear and ignorance which he confessed regularly during the first three-quarters of the text. James does not merely say that he has received this knowledge, but further that it is "properly" (καλῶς) within him. James has inscribed in himself this understanding, and it will organize his actions and thoughts over the remainder of his life.

Fear and Knowledge in Ancient Philosophy

The connection between ignorance and passions of fear or distress, which is repeatedly established in *IApocJas*, was likewise commonplace in much ancient moral philosophy. I have used the term "passions" for fear and distress because these were commonly located as paradigmatic forms of the emotions, called "passions" in philosophical works.²¹ The passions, in this broadly accepted understanding, had a primarily cognitive genesis. As Martha Nussbaum argues, this notion of the passions motivated Hellenistic philosophy to understand itself as a medical art.

²¹ See, eg, Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 4.10–15; Epictetus, *Discourses* 4.1.84 (Oldfather, LCL). For translation of Cicero, see Graver, *Cicero on the Emotions*. For the Latin text of the *Disputations*, see Max Pohlenz, ed., *De Ciceronis Tusculanis disputationibus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1909). For the Greek text of Epictetus, see Henricus Schenkl, ed., *Epicteti Dissertationes ab Arriano Digestae* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1916).

One reason [Hellenistic thinkers] believe that philosophy is the art best equipped to deal with human diseases is that they believe that philosophy—reasoning and argument—is what is required to diagnose and to modify the passions. This is so, they argue, precisely because passions such as fear, anger, grief, and love are not blind surges of affect that push and pull us without regard to reasoning and belief. They are, in fact, intelligent and discriminating elements of the personality that are very closely linked to belief, and are modified by the modification of belief.²²

The diseases of the soul, commonly through ancient thought, were passions of fear and desire, distress and love, which consistently lead people to act in ways contrary to reason. Acts contrary to reason in turn consistently cause harm to the actor so affected by passions.

If the fundamental problems of human existence derive from incorrect belief, then philosophical practice should be applied to correct false beliefs in order to break the grip of the passions over our actions and our lives. One of the clearest articulations of the origin of the passions appears in Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations*.

Now, the cause of distress, as of all the emotions, is to be found entirely in belief ... For while every emotion is a movement of the mind which is apart from reason or heedless of reason or disobedient to reason, the stimulus for such a movement may be of two kinds: it may be a belief either about what is good or about what is bad.²³

Good teaching takes as its fundamental task the modification of false beliefs. These philosophers understand that modifying false beliefs is not simply a matter of hearing new statements. It requires assiduous practice, deep engagement, and careful management of the self. Nussbaum discusses Epicurean thinkers as paradigmatic of a broader trend in Hellenistic and Roman thought. They understood “that the false beliefs that cause disturbance in life do not all lie on the surface of the self, ready for critical and dialectical scrutiny.”²⁴ The story of the *First Apocalypse of James*, read through the ancient understandings of the passions and belief, appears to be a

²² Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire*, 38.

²³ Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 3.24 (Graver).

²⁴ Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire*, 133.

story of ideal instruction. Jesus does not only present instruction in true doctrine, but offers encouragement and critique aimed at engaging James' whole psyche and enabling him to shake off these false beliefs. When James finally does correct his false beliefs, he comes to be no longer troubled by irrational passions.

I ApocJas' focus on correcting James' fear of death clearly fits within this ancient philosophical and educational discourse. The importance of the fear of death as an irrational belief impeding the good life appears most clearly in Epicurean writings of the first centuries CE. The first-century CE Roman poet Lucretius composed *On the Nature of Things* as a didactic text, and he devoted the third book to the problem of the fear of death.²⁵ He argues, in one of the clearest statements of the text's arguments, "this terror [of death], therefore, and the darkness of the mind must be dispersed, not by rays of the sun or by bright shafts of daylight, but by the aspect and law of nature."²⁶ The bulk of the third book works systematically to exhort and train the reader to understand the truth of a fully materialist view of existence, in order that they might no longer live in fear of death. If people accept this materialist teaching, then they will recognize that death is mere non-existence. Since non-existence cannot be considered an evil, according to Lucretius, then people who have inculcated this knowledge will no longer fear death. Instead, they will be able to live well and in accordance with nature. Lucretius calls on his reader to develop true beliefs about the nature of the human person with the expectation that this knowledge will be effective in treating the passions. The third-century CE inscription of Diogenes of Oeneanda, which he commissioned in order to publicly advertise the Epicurean

²⁵ For the reading of *On the Nature of Things* in terms of its didactic and therapeutic intent, see Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire*, ch. 4–6.

²⁶ Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, 3.91–93 (Rouse and Smith, LCL).

philosophy to which he held, articulates a similar notion in one fragment directly addressing Epicurus.

(Gladly have I followed your) sayings on death, and you have persuaded me to laugh it to scorn. I am not in the least afraid because of the Tityuses and Tantaluses that some people depict in the underworld, nor does the decay of the body make me shudder, bearing in mind that destruction of the body causes no displeasure when the soul has perished.²⁷

Diogenes argues that death is neither good nor bad because the soul and thus the person will not be there to experience or judge. Fears of punishment after death are likewise irrational. Once understanding is achieved and false belief dismissed, the student will be able to live without fear of death.

Arguments of this form are hardly unique to Epicurean philosophy, though Epicureans do typically make the fear of death a special concern. Catharine Edwards argues that the control of the fear of death was a central theme in Roman thought in this period.²⁸ The first-century CE Stoic philosopher Seneca, for example, explains that the fear of death is irrational, and anyone struggling to live well and rationally must no longer fear. He writes, “Most men ebb and flow in wretchedness between the fear of death and the hardships of life; they are unwilling to live, and yet they do not know how to die. For this reason, make life as a whole agreeable to yourself by banishing all worry about it.”²⁹ To triumph over the fear of death means to live in accordance with right reason, and this way of life may be achieved through assiduous practice of ferreting out false beliefs and slowly, carefully, replacing them with true beliefs. The structure of the argument in *IApocJas* follows analogous lines, as James receives instruction in true doctrine

²⁷ Diogenes of Oeneanda, fr. 14. Translation from Diogenes of Oeneanda, *Diogenes of Oeneanda: The Fragments* (ed. and trans. C.W. Chilton; London: Oxford University Press, 1971).

²⁸ Catharine Edwards, *Death in Ancient Rome* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2007), 78–112.

²⁹ Seneca, *Epistles* 4.5–6 (Gummere, LCL).

from Jesus in order that he might no longer fear death. Jesus does not only give instruction, but also exhortation and consolation. This method draws James away from his fear and allows James to accept and embody the true instruction he receives.

One might object that *1ApocJas* presents a theory of the good life and the human which is far removed from the philosophies of Lucretius, Diogenes, and Seneca. I would respond that we find arguments of this structure among Stoic and Epicurean thinkers who differ from each other significantly. The notion of attaining knowledge in order to control the passions was in fact widespread among various groups which held quite different notions of which precise beliefs were true. The discourse and practice of the inculcation of knowledge and conquering of fear is shared among writers and texts whose versions of true knowledge were profoundly different. *1ApocJas* provides further evidence of the broad ancient acceptance of this discursive link between fear and knowledge.

Practices of Understanding and Effective Theology

1ApocJas depicts James acquiring knowledge and gradually gaining control of his emotions until finally he embodies perfect equanimity at the moment of his execution. This interpretation raises further questions. How exactly is the acquisition of knowledge imagined to be effective? How does this particular knowledge enable James to control his passions and prepare for martyrdom? These questions demand a closer reading of the content of the knowledge which James acquires and the means by which Jesus relays it. This knowledge is contained in the text's theology and anthropology.

1ApocJas describes a cosmos which is controlled by malevolent powers ("rulers") and separated from the true God. Jesus begins by explaining that God is "unnameable and ineffable"

(ΟΥΑΤ† ΡΑΝ ΕΡΟQ ΜΗΝ ΟΥΑΤΩΑΧΕ ΝΗΟQ ΠΕ; NHC V 24.20–21).³⁰ The name most commonly given to God in this text is “the One Who Is” (ΠΕΤΩΟQΠ), a locution that again emphasizes the impossibility of attributing characteristics to God.³¹ The only other figure who is mentioned as an inhabitant of the divine realm is Jesus, who came forth from the One Who Is as an image of the One Who Is (11.1–3). He came forth as the “second from the One Who Is,” apparently the first differentiation, creation, or hypostasis from the One Who Is (ΕΑΝΚ ΟΥΜΕΖCΗΑΥ ΕΒΟΛ [2]Μ ΠΕΤΩΟQΠ; 10.18). This initial section also describes a figure, “femaleness,” who appears to originate from the One Who Is, but who also creates a separate and weaker base of power for herself. “Femaleness existed, but she did not exist from the beginning. She created [powers] and gods for herself” (ΤΗΝΤCΖΙΜΕ ΝΕCΩΟQΠ [ΠΕ] ΑΛΛΑ ΝΕCΩΟQΠ ΔΗ ΠΕ ΧΝ ΝΩΟΡΠ ΔCΤΑΜΙΟ ΝΑC ΝΖΝΔ[ΟΜ] ΜΝ ΖΝΝΟΥΤΕ; 10.21–24).³² This initial discussion, while allusive, sets up the basic structure of the text’s theology. There is a transcendent, ineffable God from whom Jesus has come forth. There is a subordinate power of femaleness, who has created separate powers but who does not have the same transcendent character as the ineffable God.

This theology reaches its fullest elaboration in the second dialogue’s long revelation speech (19.21–25.14). This speech takes the form of an embedded dialogue. Jesus tells James the questions he will be asked and then provides the answers James should give. Jesus explains that James will be taken before a group of malevolent powers. They will ask him questions about his identity, and Jesus, speaking both sides of this dialogue, provides for James the words with

³⁰ The Tchacos Codex appears to be nearly identical, but it is fragmentary at this point.

³¹ Gerard P. Luttikhuisen, *Gnostic Revisions of Genesis Stories and Early Jesus Traditions* (NHMS 58; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 108–112.

³² The reconstruction of “powers” (ΖΝΔΟΜ) is confirmed by NHC V 24.30.

which he can respond. Jesus tells James to explain to these power who he is, whence he comes and where he goes.

[When] you fall because of (the) many, one of them will ask you, because he is a guard, “Who are you and where are you from?” You will say to him, “I am the son and I am from the father.” And he will say to you, “Which son and which father?” You will say to him, “The Father Who Is from the beginning and the son who is in the One Who Is from the beginning.” And he will say to you, “Where have you come from?” You will say to him, “From the One Who Is from the beginning.” And he will ask <you>, “Why have you come?” You will say, “I have come to all the ones who are mine and the ones who are not mine.”

[ῬΟΤΑ]Ν ΕΚΨΑΝ2Ε 2ΙΤῆ 2Α2 [ΟΥ]Ν ΟΥῖ ΝΑΨΗΝΕ ΜΗΟΚ Ε[ΒΟ]Λ ἡ 2ΗΤΟΥ : ΧΕΥΦ[ΥΛΑΞ ΠΕ] ΧΕ [ἡ]ΤΚ ΟΥΟΥ ἡ ΝΤΚ ΟΥΕΒΟ[Λ] ΤΩΝΕ : ἡΚΧΟΟC ΝΑϫ ΧΕ [Δ]ΗΟΚ ΠΕ ΠΩΗΡΕ ΔΥΩ ΕΒΟ[Λ] 2ΙΤῆ ΠΙΩΤ : ΔΥΩ ΚΗΑΧΟ[ΟC] ΝΑΚ ΧΕ ΔΩ ἡΩΗΡΕ ἡ ΔΩ ἡΙΩΤ · ΕΚΗΑΧΟΟC Ν[Αϫ] ΧΕ ΠΙΩΤ ΕΤΨΟΟΠ Χῆ ἡΨ[ΟΡῆ] ΠΩΗΡΕ ΔΕ ΕΤΨΟΟΠ 2ῆ ΠΕΤΨΟΟΠ Χῆ ἡΨΟΡΠ ΔΥΩ ΚΗΑΧΟΟC ΝΕΚ ΧΕ ἡΤΑΚΕΙ ΤΩΝΕ : ἡΚΧΟΟC ΝΑϫ : ΧΕ ΕΒΟΛ 2Η ΠΕΤΨΟΟΠ Χῆ ἡΨΟΡῆ ΔΥΩ ΚΗΑΨῆΤ ΧΕ ΕΤΒΕ ΟΥ ΔΚΕῖ ἡΓΧΟΟC ΧΕ ἡΤΑΚΕΙ ΨΑ ΝΕΤΕΝΟΥῖ ΤΗΡΟΥ ΔΥΩ ΝΕΤΕΝΟΥῖ ΔΗ (20.7–21.18)³³

James has come from the Father Who Is, which I take as another name for the One Who Is.

James has his origin, in some unspecified way, within the same realm as the ineffable God.

James’ mission in this world is more confusing. He will say that he has come for “those who are mine and those who are not mine.” It appears that his work is directed at once to people in the world who do not have their origin or nature within the One Who Is as well as to people who share with James this particular connection to the One Who Is. To explain the nature of these other people, the text gives a fuller explanation of its creation story. The embedded dialogue continues, and Jesus says that the guards will ask about “those who are not mine.” He gives James the response he must provide.

They are not entirely foreign to me, but Achamoth, that is, the female, and she created these ones for herself. And she brought down the race which exists from the beginning. Thus, they are [not] foreign to [me], but they are mine. They are

³³ Where it is extant, the NHC V is nearly identical here. As I will discuss below, this passage also appears in Irenaeus’ *Against the Heresies* 1.21.5 and Epiphanius’ *Panarion* 1.36.3.1–6, where it is described as a ritual text. For the Greek text of Epiphanius, see Jürgen Dummer and Karl Holl, eds., *Epiphanius* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1980–1985).

[mine] according to [the fact that the one (f.) who is] lord over them is from the one who exists from the beginning. But they became [foreign] because the One Who Is from the beginning did not join with her when she created them.

ⲁⲛ ⲉⲣⲟⲓ ⲉⲡⲧⲏⲣⲓ ⲛⲉ: ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ⲁⲭⲁⲙⲱⲩ ⲉ[ⲧⲉ] ⲧⲁⲉⲓ ⲧⲉ ⲧⲉⲥⲓⲙⲉ : ⲁⲕⲱ
 ⲁⲥⲧⲁⲙⲓⲟ ⲛⲏⲁⲓ ⲛⲁⲥ : ⲁⲥⲉⲓⲛⲉ ⲁⲉ ⲉⲣⲏⲓ ⲛⲡⲓⲅⲉⲛⲟⲥ ⲉⲧⲱⲟⲟⲛ ⲭⲏ ⲛⲱⲟⲣ[ⲛ] ⲁⲣⲁ ⲃⲉ
 ⲁⲛ ⲉⲣⲟⲓ ⲁⲛ ⲛⲓⲉ [ⲁ]ⲗⲗⲁ ⲛⲉⲧⲉⲛⲟⲩⲧⲓ ⲛⲉ ⲛⲓⲉⲧⲉⲛⲟⲩⲧⲓ [ⲙⲉ]ⲛ ⲛⲉ ⲕⲁⲧⲁ [ⲟ]ⲉ
 [ⲉⲧⲉ ⲧⲉⲧⲟ] ⲛⲭⲥ ⲉⲣⲟⲟⲩ ⲧⲁ ⲛⲉⲧⲱⲁⲁ[ⲧ ⲧⲉ] ⲭⲏ ⲛⲱⲁⲣⲛ : ⲛⲧⲁⲕⲣ̅ ⲱⲛ[ⲙⲟ] ⲁⲉ ⲭⲉ
 ⲙⲡⲉⲧⲉⲧⲱⲁⲁⲛ ⲭⲏ ⲛⲱⲟⲣⲛ ⲕⲟⲓⲛⲱⲛⲓ ⲛⲙⲙⲁⲥ ⲛⲧⲉⲣⲉⲥⲧⲁⲙⲓⲟⲟ[ⲩ] (21.2–15)³⁴

Those who are not James', the people to whom he has come, derive their origin from Achamoth, the female. Their differentiation from the divine comes about because "the One Who Is from the beginning did not unite with her when she created them." So, this other creator, the female, is responsible for the differentiation of the world from the divine. She created without the preexistent One Who Is, and by this act she produced a people who are alienated from the divine. The naming of Achamoth as "the female" also explains the earlier passage about femaleness. The powers and gods that rule over this world are subordinate to Achamoth, who is a divine figure lesser than Jesus and the One Who Is. The powers who will question James, then, are themselves agents of femaleness.

Learning this theology prepares James for martyrdom. The literary form which this revelation takes has a further rhetorical function. It exhorts James to enact specific practices of ritual repetition in order to incorporate right knowledge. In the long revelation speech, Jesus provides both sides of an embedded dialogue, first offering the questions various rulers will ask of James, then providing the responses James will give. It repeats, "he will say ... and you shall say." The content of this dialogue constitutes the fullest exposition of the text's theology and

³⁴ Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed*, 407. Thomassen explains that the line here which says that Achamoth "brought down the race which exists from the beginning" can be explained by reference to the Greek version of this passage preserved in Epiphanius' *Panarion* 36.3.1–6. The Coptic verb ⲉⲓⲛⲉ ⲉⲣⲏⲓ translates the Greek κατάγω. This verb can mean something like "bring down," but also has a technical meaning of "descend from." The "race which is from the beginning" would refer to the higher beings of the divine realms, which came forth from the One Who Is. Achamoth did not "bring them down" in some unspecified way, but rather she descends from them. This is confirmed later in the passage by the statement that she is from the One Who Is.

cosmology. Jesus provides James with a clear and affirmative summary of true knowledge. This true knowledge enables James to triumph over his fear. *IApocJas* places this knowledge in memorizable form. Jesus tells James that he must remember particular statements so that he can repeat them in response to questioning. This embedded dialogue structure, then, exhorts particular practices of memorization and recitation of this summary of true knowledge.

This interpretation accords well with the textual history of the passage. As discussed briefly earlier, large sections of *IApocJas* 20.10–23.10 were also preserved, almost word-for-word, in Irenaeus’ *Against the Heresies* 1.21.5 and Epiphanius’ *Panarion* 36.3.1–6. Scholars have concluded that Epiphanius has Irenaeus as his source, and so I will here compare only Irenaeus and *IApocJas*.³⁵ Irenaeus states that he is transmitting a ritual text used by some unspecified group of heretics. Member of this group, when they are dying, receive instruction so that they might escape the world rulers after death. Speaking of ritual practice among this group, he writes that “at the very moment of their departure” the dying are anointed and then receive instruction:

They instruct them that, after they have died, when they come to the powers, they are to speak as follows: “I am a son of Father, of Father who is preexisting. I am a son in the Preexisting one. I have come to see all things that belong to me and to others (which, however, do not belong to others entirely, but to Achamoth, who is a female). She made these things for herself. So they got their origin from the Pre-existing one, and I am returning to my own, whence I came.”³⁶

There is one key difference between Irenaeus’ text and this passage from *IApocJas*. Irenaeus does not cite these lines in a dialogue form, and there are no injunctions to say certain words in response to certain questions. Instead, Irenaeus’ version of this teaching includes only the

³⁵ See Vielleux, *Le deux apocalypses de Jacques*, 87–88; Yoo, “Die erste Apokalypse de Jakobus,” 161–175. I will discuss further the textual relationship between *IApocJas* and Irenaeus in chapter 4, pages 78–81.

³⁶ Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies*, 1.21.5 (Unger).

various statements which Jesus instructs James to memorize and repeat to the rulers. The responses are presented one after another, as a single speech, not interrupted by questions. The content of the answers, preserved in both texts, is nearly identical.

In Irenaeus, just as in *IApocJas*, these are powerful words to be memorized. Further, in both cases, the repetition of statements is a form of training for death. In *IApocJas*, James may not be on his deathbed, but he is just as surely about to die. He must learn these statements to prepare himself for martyrdom. Irenaeus suggests that the passage was used for ritual instruction to prepare people for death, and that is exactly how this passage functions in *IApocJas*. It is possible that Irenaeus may have misinterpreted a ritual of preparation for death as a ritual performed over people who were actually dying. In that case, both Irenaeus and *IApocJas* preserve a record of an early Christian ritual of preparation for death.

The notion that the memorization and recitation of formulae constituted a key practice in the preparation for martyrdom has been argued with reference to other sources by Nicole Kelley. Looking at multiple attestations of Psalm 146 in acts of the martyrs, Kelley argues that the memorization and recitation of these passages played a part in preparation for martyrdom. Memorizing these passages could instill a belief that God's eternal rule transcends and obviates the worldly authority of persecutors.³⁷

For three reasons, then, I take the embedded dialogue as an exhortation to particular practices of memorization and recitation. First, Jesus' instructions to James call on him to be ready to repeat these words, implying a repeated practice of memorization and preparation for recitation. Second, an almost exactly parallel passage is described by Irenaeus as a teaching which is imparted to people about to die, for them to learn and repeat. Third, other Christians practiced the recitation and memorization of key formulae in preparation for martyrdom. The

³⁷ Kelley, "Philosophy as Training for Death," 739–742.

precise manner of the presentation of theological doctrine in *IApocJas*, then, implicitly exhorts readers and hearers to undertake practices to aid in the incorporation of knowledge.

Thus, *IApocJas* works to inculcate dispositions and exhort practices of preparation for martyrdom. Recent studies of genre that consider *IApocJas* help to shed light on how the text engenders these two effects. Studies by Judith Hartenstein and Silke Petersen have attempted to move beyond the fuzzy category of the “revelation dialogue” or “Gnostic dialogue” to consider particular structural similarities among texts. Hartenstein identifies a set of dialogue texts which have what she calls a “story-within-a-story” format. These texts depict dialogues in which a story of the death and resurrection of Jesus is narrated, and revelation is given following the resurrection.³⁸ She argues that these texts share not only structural similarities, but also a rhetorical and theological strategy. “The choice of an appearance of the resurrected as a framework for the revelation does not happen because of the lack of room in the earthly life of Jesus, but because of a theological idea: the content of the text constitutes a second and definitive teaching.”³⁹ These are texts, Hartenstein argues, which work in similar ways, toward similar ends.

Silke Petersen builds on Hartenstein’s work in identifying these texts as “appearance dialogues,” given the central necessity of an appearance of the resurrected Jesus to the group. She identifies the *Sophia of Jesus Christ*, the *First Apocalypse of James*, the *Gospel of Mary*, the *Epistle of the Apostles*, and *Pistis Sophia* as sharing in this structure.⁴⁰ The dialogues take place between Jesus and his disciples, with female disciples playing prominent roles in *SJC*, *GMary*,

³⁸ Judith Hartenstein, *Die zweite Lehre: Erscheinungen des Auferstandenen als Rahmenerzählung frühchristlicher Dialoge* (TU 146; Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2000), 249–283.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 317.

⁴⁰ Silke Petersen, *Zerstört die Werke der Weiblichkeit! Maria Magdalena, Salome und andere Jüngerinnen Jesu in christlich-gnostischen Schriften* (NHMS 48; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 38.

and *PS. IApocJas*, while it does not have any spoken parts for female disciples, identifies a group of women as honored disciples of Jesus, and treats them as an important topic of discussion. Petersen hypothesizes that this structure of dialogue concerning ultimate revelation serves a rhetorical purpose—to spur dialogue among readers and hearers, and to bring them to accept and believe the revelation contained in the text. “The dialogues are texts in which elements of orality also play a role in textual composition. Dialogues were, like other ancient texts, not mostly read privately, but read aloud, listened to, and surely also debated, by which process the dialogue-situation was duplicated.”⁴¹ These are texts that we can imagine were read in groups, and in such a group setting, the dialogue structure serves to spur discussion among people. Petersen further argues that appearance dialogues often have a final summary of their revelation, which is meant to be taken up by readers and hearers as their own knowledge, to be repeated and learned.⁴²

I argue that *IApocJas* exhorts a practice of inculcation of knowledge through ritual repetition, a practice which requires at least two participants (one for each side of the dialogue). In my reading of *IApocJas*, then, the text does basically what Petersen says that appearance dialogues should do. It exhorts its audience toward further dialogue, in which the content of the further dialogue mirrors the content of the text.⁴³

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 42–43.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 43. These claims comport well with recent studies of genre. John Frow argues, “genres actively generate and shape knowledge of the world, and ... generically shaped knowledges are bound up with the exercise of power.” Further, “genres create effects of reality and truth, authority and plausibility.” Genre, in this reading, is understood in terms of the kinds of effects which texts bring about, within particular social and historical situations of power. John Frow, *Genre* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 2.

⁴³ For an analogous reading of ancient philosophical dialogues as training for death, see Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 89–93.

Preparation for martyrdom here involves ritual practice aimed at the incorporation of knowledge. How is this memorized knowledge useful for inculcating dispositions proper to a potential martyr? I argue that *1ApocJas* makes effective its theological doctrine for the preparation for martyrdom by linking that theology to its anthropology. Before Jesus' long post-resurrection speech, James admits he has been distressed because of what was done to Jesus. Jesus' first attempt to console James challenges the cause of James' distress.

ἡπιρισε γ[αρ] ἂ[ν] λαοῦ[ς] οὐδε ἡπιμοῦ ἀγῶ πεσειλαος εἰτε παει πε ἡπεαῖρ λαοῦς
ἡπεθοοῦ παῖ δε εἰκην εἰρηῇ ἡπιτῦπος ἡἡαρχων ε<ω>ω<ε> εροα εσβ[ι]ωτῖ
ναρχων ἡνετασβῖωτῖ τοῖε ἀαχωκ εβολ (18.12–16)⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Kasser/Wurst propose an emendation to the text, which would otherwise not be readable as Coptic. The emendation is supported by comparison to the NHC V version. It is broken by lacunae in several places, but the second sentence of the quoted passage is mostly complete. “This was laid down as a type of the rulers, and it deserved to be [destroyed] by them” (ⲛⲉⲣⲉ ⲛⲁⲓ ⲁⲉ ⲕⲏ ⲉⲣⲁⲓⲓ ⲛⲓ ⲟⲩⲩⲩⲣⲟⲥ ⲛⲧⲉ ⲛⲁⲣⲭⲱⲛⲏ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲛⲉⲓⲛⲓⲱⲁ ⲛⲓⲓⲱⲁⲓ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲉⲓⲧⲟⲟⲩⲟⲩ; V 31.23–26). The reconstruction of “it was fitting” matches the NHC V “it deserved.” Here, also, the TC can help explain the meaning of the ⲛⲁⲓ in NHC V. Schoedel took “this” to refer back to the people, but instead it refers to the death of Jesus and the destruction of his body.

13.20–23). The notion seems to be that one’s flesh, which suffers and dies, is not worthy of great moral concern. Rather, the flesh and the body should be understood in terms of a cosmic drama of lower and higher divinities. The flesh which suffers and dies does not derive from the highest God and should not be counted among the essential aspects of Jesus. Instead, it is a type of the rulers, the lower divinities, and its nature is to cease to exist.

Jesus in this way reassures James that James should not worry about him. But when Jesus reveals to James that he too must be arrested and killed, James, “being afraid ... wept and was deeply distressed” (19.7–8). Jesus exhorts him again by applying to James’ situation the notion of the human used to discount Jesus’ suffering. “These things must happen to you, but do not be distressed. The weak flesh will receive what is laid down for it. But as for you, do not be afraid and fear nothing” (ⲱⲱⲉ ⲉⲣⲟⲕ ⲉⲱⲱⲡⲉ ⲓⲛ ⲛⲁⲓ ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ⲛⲡⲣⲁⲩⲧⲡⲉⲓ ⲧⲥⲁⲣⲁⲛ ⲉⲧⲃⲟⲟⲃ ⲥⲛⲁⲭⲓ ⲛⲡⲉⲧⲕⲛⲛⲉⲥ ⲉⲓⲣⲁⲓ ⲛⲧⲟⲕ ⲁⲉ ⲛⲡⲣⲱⲱⲡⲉ ⲛⲃⲁⲃⲓⲛⲧ; 19.11–16).⁴⁶ Just as the true essence of Jesus was not killed, likewise for James only “the weak flesh” will suffer. In Coptic, the last sentence quoted begins ⲛⲧⲟⲕ ⲁⲉ, a topicalization of the pronoun. I have given this a strong translation, “but as for you.” The topicalization of ⲛⲧⲟⲕ makes clear that the subject of this clause is to be distinguished from the subject of the previous clause, the “weak flesh.” “You,” James, should recognize that your “weak flesh” does not contain your true identity. James, then, ought not fear. Just as the real essence of Jesus was not harmed in martyrdom, likewise only the weak flesh of James will suffer and his essential self will survive. The rulers, not the true God, created the flesh, and it is their type. When James comes to understand theological truth, he will understand

⁴⁶ The NHC V version has a similar sense, but its articulation is somewhat more direct. “James, so you will undergo these sufferings, but don’t be troubled. For the flesh is weak. It will receive what was destined for it.” (ⲓⲱⲥⲧⲉ ⲕⲛⲁⲭⲓ ⲛⲛⲉⲓⲛⲕⲟⲟⲓ ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ⲛⲡⲣⲥⲓ ⲱⲛⲓⲛⲧ ⲧⲥⲁⲣⲁⲛ ⲉⲧⲃⲟⲟⲃ ⲧⲉ ⲥⲛⲁⲭⲓ ⲛⲉⲛⲧⲁⲩⲧⲁⲱⲧⲓ ⲛⲁⲥ; V 32.17–21). NHC V clarifies that “these things” are the suffering and death which await James. James’ emotional response in both versions shows that he understands precisely to what Jesus refers.

that what the rulers created is worthy of no concern when compared to that which derives from the highest God.

This is the simplest structure of *IApocJas*' exhortation to the preparation for martyrdom. One must not fear persecution, pain and death. The inculcation of fearlessness enables one to act bravely under arrest. To control fear, the reader or hearer is exhorted to practice memorization and recitation of true knowledge. Jesus reveals the nature of the universe, the distinction between lower rulers and highest God. The death and attendant suffering which a person might fear, Jesus explains, is inflicted not upon an aspect of the person which derives from the highest God, but on "the type of the rulers." The knowledge which Jesus imparts is effective in this way. James thinks of his suffering and death as

negative events to come, but Jesus exhorts him to understand them as indifferent because they are inflicted upon an inessential aspect of himself created by the rulers. If he can truly incorporate this understanding, James will cease to fear suffering and death.

Martyrdom, Christology, and "Docetism"

I have used language of "aspects" and "essences" to describe what Jesus means when he says "I did not suffer at all and I did not die." Some essential aspect of Jesus survives when his body dies. As I have argued, there is no denial that Jesus' death occurred. Rather, the text's claim is that the essential aspect of Jesus was not harmed in the process of his bodily death. Armand Vielleux and other interpreters take *IApocJas* 18.6–16 (NHC V 31.15–26) as a clear statement of docetic Christology.⁴⁷ But what exactly is "docetism"? Generally, the term refers to a Christology which holds that in some way the bodily reality of Jesus has not been affirmed. But

⁴⁷ Vielleux, *Les deux apocalypses de Jacques*, 84. See also Brown, "James," 86–87.

any more precision than this is often hard to come by. As Michael Slusser notes, scholars often seem to “classify as ‘docetistic’ only those Christologies in which Jesus does not meet a minimum standard of humanity—a standard which varies from scholar to scholar.”⁴⁸

Karl Tröger offers a useful categorization of different Christologies which have been variously grouped together as “docetic.” Tröger distinguishes between four general types of Christologies. First, there are notions which deny that Jesus had a material body and claim instead that his was a spiritual or heavenly body. Second, he lists Christologies which hold that Jesus had a real and material body, but his divine nature must be radically distinguished from his bodily aspect. Less relevant for this study, third and fourth are notions which held that the crucified was an entirely different person from Jesus and notions which do not separate Jesus’ bodily aspect from the rest of his existence.⁴⁹ Tröger reads *IApocJas* as a Christology of the second type.⁵⁰ There is in *IApocJas* no denial of Jesus’ bodily existence, nor of his execution. However, in describing the true self of Jesus, any essential connection between Jesus and his flesh is denied. Whether or not this theology is “docetic” is then a definitional question. Tröger retains the category of “docetic” only for Christologies of the first kind, in which Jesus only “seemed” to have a material body. I think this is a sensible suggestion for the more literal use of a complex term. As such, following Tröger, I prefer not to claim that *IApocJas* holds a “docetic” Christology.

The foregoing analysis brings into focus how deeply the text’s Christology is intertwined with its anthropology. Jesus moves logically from articulating his own freedom from suffering to

⁴⁸ Michael Slusser, “Docetism: A Historical Definition,” *Second Century* 1.3 (1981), 165.

⁴⁹ Karl Wolfgang Tröger, “Doketistische Christologie in Nag-Hammadi-Texten,” *Kairos* 19 (1977), 45–48.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 49. See also Klaus Koschorke, *Die Polemik der Gnostiker gegen das kirchliche Christentum* (NHS 12; Leiden: Brill, 1978), 195–196.

arguing that James and other martyrs likewise do not have anything to fear from torture and execution. So, when Jesus says, “I did not suffer at all, and I did not die,” he is not articulating something that is peculiar to himself as the son of God. Rather, all people share this characteristic structure of the self. The flesh and the body may suffer and die, but the essential aspect of the human survives. This applies whether the body in question is that of Jesus, James, or anyone else. The ability of James to imitate Jesus at the moment of his death helps confirm this interpretation. The martyr who has fully incorporated the text’s teachings can thus become like Jesus.

1ApocJas exhorts preparation for martyrdom by means of this connection of Christology to anthropology. The text explains that the martyr’s flesh may suffer, but the martyr in his or her essential aspect will not. It is precisely this training in knowledge which enables James to control his fear and act according to proper dispositions during his arrest and execution. The intersection of Christology and anthropology provides the basis and structure of preparation for martyrdom.

I highlight this intersection between Christology and martyrdom because it can offer a corrective to some theoretical work on martyrdom. W.H.C. Frend has argued that “martyrdom [was] in imitation of Christ’s Passion and physical suffering,” and as such that Christians who denied that suffering occurred could not support martyrdom.⁵¹ A similar formulation appears in a recent essay by Laurence Cunningham. Cunningham argues that Christians who did not recognize the value of the material body, especially Christ’s material body, could not appreciate or value martyrdom. “Gnostic Christians had neither a penchant for martyrdom nor an appreciation of it, since, almost to a person, the Gnostics were docetists with little evidence that

⁵¹ Frend, “The Gnostic Sects and the Roman Empire,” 32–33.

they valued the material in general and the body in particular.”⁵² *IApocJas* demonstrates that support for martyrdom does not necessarily correlate with a Christology that emphasizes the bodily suffering of Jesus. The text makes an extended argument for martyrdom based on a Christology under which Jesus’ suffering body should be radically distinguished from his essential, eternal aspect which survives. Considering *IApocJas* as a martyrdom text demonstrates the variety of Christological and theological positions which might allow support for martyrdom.

Such a relationship between Christology and martyrdom in *IApocJas* was noted in earlier work by Elaine Pagels. She identifies a set of Nag Hammadi texts, including *IApocJas*, which either denied entirely the suffering of Christ, or which recognized that suffering occurred but denied that this suffering touched Christ’ divine nature.⁵³ Pagels demonstrates that among these texts, support for martyrdom was found only among the latter group. She argues for a strict relationship of correlation; “in every case, the interpretation of Christ’s passion corresponds to the attitude toward martyrdom.”⁵⁴ *IApocJas* fits Pagels’ argument. It disputes in no way the embodied death of Christ, but it draws a strict distinction between Christ’s essential nature and his suffering body. Pagels argues that texts of this sort should take a pro-martyrdom position because of their acceptance of the real, bodily death of Christ, and indeed *IApocJas* does so.

I suggest, however, that some further nuance is necessary. The strict correlation suggests that it is the belief in the flesh of Jesus which enables a belief in martyrdom. In *IApocJas*, it is the belief that the flesh of Jesus is not the essential Jesus which undergirds the text’s exhortation to martyrdom. Pagels rightly sees a correlation between the honoring of martyrdom and the

⁵² Laurence Cunningham, “Christian Martyrdom: A Theological Perspective” in Budde and Scott, *Witness of the Body*, 12–13.

⁵³ Elaine Pagels, “Gnostic and Orthodox Views of Christ’s Passion,” 264.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 271.

belief in the reality of the body and the death of Christ. However, this does not mean that support for martyrdom must be based on the reality of Christ's bodily death. *IApocJas* argues that the preparation for martyrdom works not by activating its belief in the reality of the body which dies, but by recalling that the body which dies is only the inessential aspect of the human. The argument for martyrdom in *IApocJas* depends on that aspect of its theology and anthropology which most differs from a radically non-docetic position on the bodily death of Christ. The relationship between Christology, visions of the human, and valuation of martyrdom does not have the form of a strict correlation, but rather various, differing forms of Christologies and visions of the human could equally be instrumentalized toward the exhortation to martyrdom.

Practices of Discernment and the Discourse of Martyrdom

IApocJas, then, makes use of its theology and Christology for preparation for martyrdom by emphasizing that the fleshly suffering of the martyr does not ultimately affect the essential aspects of the person. This understanding is to be inculcated through practices of memorization and recitation. The third way in which *IApocJas* instrumentalizes its theology for the preparation for martyrdom is by exhorting a constant practice of discernment. This practice resembles in some ways practices endorsed by Stoic thinkers such as Epictetus, who argued that one must at all times engage the world by asking questions of what things are really worth moral concern.⁵⁵ In *IApocJas*, this practice takes the form of working to discern, within everyday events, an underlying meaning related to the cosmic drama of the rulers and the One Who Is. If James can understand the events of his persecution in terms of their significance and effects within the heavenly drama, he will be prepared to respond properly under arrest and at the moment of

⁵⁵ See, e.g., Epictetus, *Manual* 1 (Oldfather, LCL).

execution. *I ApocJas* exhorts this practice through a literary blurring of referents, where events in the heavens and on earth are described in equivalent, overlapping language.

The text draws an analogy between this-worldly authorities who will arrest James and heavenly powers who will detain his soul after death. The same words are used to describe both the this-worldly arrests of James and Jesus and the heavenly arrest of James' soul. Jesus predicts his own arrest and death early in the text, saying, "they will arrest me the day after tomorrow" (CENΔΔHΔZTE NHOEI NCΔ PACTE; V 25.7–8).⁵⁶ At the conclusion of the text, the same terms are used during the narrative of James' arrest and execution. "It happened after ... [that] James was arrested" (ΔCΩΩΠE MNNCΔ [.] IΩ ΔYΔHΔZTE NΔKKΩ[BOC]; 28.25–27). Strikingly, this same construction also appears at the beginning of the long post-resurrection revelation speech. The language of James' seizure during his ascent in the divine realms mimics the language of his actual arrest later in the text. It is the same verb ΔHΔZTE. In this speech, quoted extensively above, Jesus describes the heavenly drama in which James will be interrogated by malevolent rulers. James, concerned about his fate, asks, "What word can I say before I can escape them?" (ΔΩ NΩΔXE ΠE TNAΩ XOOI ΩAN TP BOΔ EPOOY; V 29.2–3).⁵⁷ Jesus finally provides a response that leaves open the question of whether these are words he must say to heavenly rulers or worldly authorities. "Look, I am going to reveal to you your salvation. When you are arrested, you will be among the following ones." (EIC ZHTE TNOY TNA ΔΩAN NAK EBOΔ HΠEKCΩTE

⁵⁶ The TC version here is fragmentary, but it has been restored based on comparison to NHC V and appears to agree. "They will [arrest me after] three days" (CENΔΔHΔZTE NHOEI MNNCΔ ΩC [N]ZO[OY]; 11.9–11).

⁵⁷ The TC version again is fragmentary here, but it seems to reflect a similar question. The use of the limitative in NHC V, "before I can escape them," is peculiar, and the wording of TC, as reconstructed by Brankaer and Bethge, seems like a more natural way of phrasing the question. James wants to know what he can say to defeat and escape his captors. "Through what word [will I find] salvation?" ([TNAΔN] HOYZH ZITN ΔΩ NΩΔ[XE]; 15.17–18). Brankaer and Bethge, *Codex Tchacos*, 98–99, 194–195.

20ΤΑΝ ΕΥΨΑΝΑΜΑΖΤΕ ΠΗΟΚ ΚΗΛΩΠΕ 2Π ΗΔΕΙ; 19.22–25).⁵⁸ Once again, the verb is ἀμαζτε.

The prophesied arrest of James by this-worldly authorities is described in the same language as his detainment by malevolent heavenly rulers.

The implicit argument in *IApocJas* runs that the underlying meaning of arrest and persecution must be understood in terms of a heavenly drama. The persecutors, here, are aligned with the rulers. The text calls on James to interpret them as such. Scholars have noted that various early Christian texts that talk about evil “rulers” in control of the world commonly draw implicit equivalences between these heavenly rulers and the existing authorities of the texts’ contemporary worlds.⁵⁹ The blurring of the difference between these two kinds of arrests and two kinds of rulers works to drive James to interpret this-worldly events in terms of their higher meaning or significance. When one is arrested and interrogated, the text suggests, one is doing battle with the world rulers and one must not surrender. The responses which Jesus provides, which James ought to memorize and recite, are rebukes that assert that these authorities lack true power. Despite being under arrest, James will be able to resist and triumph because of his relationship with the One Who Is. The practice of discernment of the true meaning of arrest and persecution, then, is intended to instill dispositions which enable the potential martyr to resist questioning, to refuse to give in. If James understands that the people who have arrested him, who wish his death, are world rulers over whom he can win a greater victory by refusing to cooperate, then he will be able to accept martyrdom and not recant or attempt to flee. This is precisely the attitude that can be seen in James in his final moments, as he never attempts to escape his captors or avoid his fate. The text exhorts this practice of discernment, based on the

⁵⁸ Comparison to NHC V confirms the linguistic parallel. “Look, I will reveal to you your salvation. When you are arrested, you will receive these sufferings” ([ΕΙC] 2ΗΤΕ †ΗΔΩΛΠ ΗΑΚ ΕΒΟΛ ΠΠΕΚΩΤΕ ΕΨΩΠΕ ΕΥΨΑΝΑΜΑΖΤΕ ΠΗ[ΟΚ] ΔΥΩ [Π]ΓΧΙ ΠΗΕΙΠΚΟΟ2; V 32.29–33.3).

⁵⁹ See King, *The Secret Revelation of John*, 157–173.

knowledge of the true theology and the nature of the world rulers, to inculcate schemas of action in the face of persecution that will enable the potential martyr to accept his fate and understand it as victory.

I believe that this exhortation to discernment can help explain one of the major textual problems in *1ApocJas*. For a martyrdom text, the actual narrative of the martyrdom appears entirely non-standard. I will argue that the peculiarity of the narrative is the point. It demands from the reader careful interpretation. To explain how this works, I need to contextualize the narrative of James' death within the ancient discourse of martyrdom.

As discourses and practices of martyrdom developed in the second and third centuries CE, particular elements came to proliferate in related texts. In his discussion of shifts in the discourse of martyrdom in the second and third centuries CE, Daniel Boyarin notes that “a ritualized and performative speech act associated with a statement of pure essence becomes the central action of the martyrology.”⁶⁰ Likewise, in his typology of Jewish and Christian martyrdom, Jan Willem van Henten argues that one key element of these texts is the “examination, often accompanied by torture, by the ruler or other officials” in which the Jewish or Christian martyr “choose[s] to die rather than to obey the authorities.”⁶¹ The interrogation of the potential martyr became the climax of the text, and in turn the climax of the interrogation occurred with this performative speech act.

⁶⁰ Boyarin, *Dying for God*, 95–96.

⁶¹ Jan Willem van Henten, “Jewish and Christian Martyrs,” in *Holy Persons in Judaism and Christianity* (ed. Marcel Poorthuis and Joshua Schwartz; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 166–167.

Paradigmatic is the interrogation of Polycarp in the third-century CE *Martyrdom of Polycarp*.⁶² Arrested and taken to the arena, Polycarp is questioned by a government official before a hostile crowd. The proconsul demands that he “swear by the genius of Caesar” and say “away with the atheists.” Polycarp groans and, gesturing at crowd in the stadium, calls out “away with the atheists.”⁶³ He not only refuses to recant, he indicts the official and the crowd under the same terms they sought to indict him. Pressing on, the proconsul again tells Polycarp, “swear by the genius of Caesar.” Polycarp remains steadfast, and climactically announces, “I am a Christian.”⁶⁴ With this statement, Polycarp effectively condemns himself and the proconsul sentences him to death. In the scene of interrogation, a power-laden dialogue climaxes in a performative statement of identity.

In *IApocJas*, the scene of interrogation plays more as a comedy of errors than as the climax of a drama. James is not arrested for the crime of being a Christian, but apparently by mistake. The text reads, “James was arrested instead of another man” (ΑΥΑΜΑΖΤΕ ΝΙΑΚΚΩ[ΒΟC NT]ΩCΒΙΩ ΕΠΙΜΑ ΗΚΕΡΩΜΕ; 29.26–27). A lacuna and uncertain antecedents make parsing the following passage difficult, but it may not even be James who is then brought before the authorities. “It was another person named James who came out from the prison, and they arrested this one [for] him, and they brought him to the judges” (ΚΑ[Ι]ΟΥΑ ΠΕΝΤΑCΕ[Ι] ΕΒΟΛ 2ῆ ΠΕΩ[Τ]ΕΚΟ ΕΙΑΚΚΩΒ[ΟC] ΠΕ ΠΕCΡΑΝ ΑΥΑΜΑΖΤΕ ΠΠ[Δ]Ι [2Α]ΡΟC ΔΥΕΙΝΕ ΠΜΟC ΠΝΕΚΡΙΤΗ[C];

⁶² For the text and translation of the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, see Musurillo, *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 2–21. On dating and composition, see Moss, *The Other Christs*, 196–198. For the reading of the interrogation scene, see Boyarin, *Dying for God*, 51.

⁶³ *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 9.2 (Musurillo).

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 10.1.

30.4–7). This man is then released.⁶⁵ “The majority of the judges saw that he had no sin, and they [released him]” (ΠΕ2[Ο]ΥΟ ΔΕ ΝΗΚΡΙΤΗC ΔΥΝΕΥ Ε[ΡΟ]Ι ΕΜΗ ΝΟΒΕ Ε[ΡΟ]Ι ΔΥΚ[ΔΔC] ΕΒΟΛ; 30.8–10). Debates between the judges and the people follow, but no interrogation scene takes place. After another lacuna James is stoned to death. It is possible that one of the lacunae either preceding or following this confusing passage contains a traditional interrogation, but it would have to be very short. Even a short interrogation seems unlikely. The scene does not suggest that either the authorities or the people have a clear legal case against James that would require his interrogation. Instead, James is executed as a result of a case of mistaken identity. He does not indict himself with a performative statement of identity under questioning.

Given the importance of the interrogation scene and the performative “I am a Christian” to much martyrdom literature, their absence at the conclusion of *IApocJas* requires some explanation. I argue that it constitutes the text’s particular engagement with discourses surrounding martyrdom. I want to highlight this engagement both to explain *IApocJas* and to offer a small corrective to recent studies of the discourses of martyrdom. There was much more to ancient disputations over martyrdom than simply claims to support or oppose the practice. While I believe the debate between what Jesper Hyldahl calls the “martyrdom of death” and the “martyrdom of knowledge” was real and significant, it does not cover the entirety of the disputes among ancient Christians.⁶⁶ In *IApocJas*, we have evidence of a text articulating support for martyrdom while carefully policing the bounds of proper and improper martyrdom.

⁶⁵ Brankaer and Bethge hypothesize that this “other person named James” represents the fleshly James, while the spiritual James escapes his captors. I find this unlikely, since the text needs to build to James’ actual death. His performance of perfect equanimity in the conclusion requires James’ full presence. Brankaer and Bethge, *Codex Tchacos*, 251–252.

⁶⁶ Paul Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom and Cosmic Conflict in Early Christianity* (New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 20–23; Jesper Hyldahl, “Gnostic Critique of Martyrdom,” in *Contextualising Early Christian Martyrdom* (ed. Jakob Engberg; ECCA 8; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2011), 119–138. Hyldahl cites the *Testimony of Truth* and the

IApocJas in fact does not lack an interrogation scene, but the scene has been displaced in order to more clearly articulate the essence of proper martyrdom. This displaced interrogation scene occurs in the heavens. As I have noted, Jesus tells James that before he is interrogated by the “guard” and the “toll collectors,” he will be “arrested.” The embedded dialogue itself bears the characteristics of a martyr’s interrogation. James is first arrested. Then he is put to the question by hostile forces, and he responds with statements of identity. By means of clever responses to their questions, James demonstrates his superiority to his interrogators and condemns them as lacking in virtue, knowledge, and power. While this scene of interrogation resembles Polycarp’s interrogation in the arena, it differs in two important respects. First, most obviously, it takes place not in the arena before a government official, but in the heavens before malevolent divine powers. Second, the performative statement of identity is no simple “I am a Christian” but an extended discourse on the nature of humanity, the highest God, and the lower rulers.

The embedded dialogue, then, contains not only the words which James must say under interrogation from heavenly powers. It outlines also the basis of an exhortation to martyrdom. James is truly the son who comes from the One Who Is, which means that his essential self derives from the highest God. His flesh is not his true self, and so he need not worry about what will happen to his body, even up to torture and execution. Further, the true meaning of interrogation in this world can only be understood by reference to the malevolent powers in the heavens. The resistance under “arrest” in this world mirrors the resistance under “arrest” which one will perform in the heavenly realms. The statements of identity James proffers contain in themselves justification for martyrdom and the reasoning under which one should remain

Apocalypse of Peter as texts which rejected bodily martyrdom, but he suggests little diversity beyond this duality of total support for or opposition to martyrdom.

unafraid in the face of interrogation. James' demeanor at the moment of execution demonstrates that he has truly inculcated this knowledge and become unafraid, as he intones "forgive them." James' confessions contain the necessary instruction for preparation for martyrdom, and his actions at his death demonstrate that he has truly understood this instruction. *IApocJas*, then, displaces its interrogation scene to the heavens and expands its performative statement of identity to encompass a complete theological justification for martyrdom.

By doing so, the text engages in a debate over the nature of true martyrdom. *IApocJas*' intervention in martyrdom discourse resembles a set of claims made by Heracleon about martyrdom, cited approvingly by Clement of Alexandria in the fourth book of his *Stromateis*. Heracleon makes a distinction between two kinds of confession, and relates them to martyrdom. "There is a confession by faith and conduct, and one with the voice. The confession that is made with the voice, and before the authorities, is what the most reckon the only confession. Not soundly; and hypocrites can also confess with this confession." Heracleon does not argue that confession before the authorities is a false confession. In fact he argues, "All the saved have confessed with the confession made by the voice." Rather, what is necessary for right confession, and thus for the right kind of martyrdom, is a transformation of the self so that faith and conduct confess Christ before the voice does. "For he will rightly confess with his voice who has first confessed with his disposition." Clement explicitly agrees with all these claims, saying, "he seems to be of the same sentiments as us in this section."⁶⁷ Heracleon and Clement argue that the Christian is called to more than simply an act of confession under interrogation. What is required is a full transformation of the person such that one's understanding and conduct are in accord with truth. Confessing under interrogation should be simply a byproduct of this transformation.

⁶⁷ Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 4.9 (ANF 2:422). For the Greek text of the fourth book of the *Stromateis*, see Anniewies van den Hoek, ed. and trans., *Clément d'Alexandrie: Stromate IV* (SC 463; Paris: Cerf, 2001).

Clement's position is somewhat slippery in this section. He states his agreement with Heracleon, but then later he appears to suggest that those who confess with the voice, but not with conduct, nonetheless confess truly. "Their witness, then, appears to be the cleansing away of sins with glory."⁶⁸ However, in the following section, Clement rejects those who make themselves available to be arrested. The key issue for Clement here is not that this person "volunteers" for martyrdom, but that he does not have the confession of faith and conduct.⁶⁹ His actions mark him an unfit martyr. As Clement puts it in an earlier discussion, "they do not preserve the characteristic mark of believing martyrdom, inasmuch as they have not known the true God."⁷⁰ These martyrs whom Clement rejects, then, lack precisely the characteristic that Heracleon also demands—the confession of faith that comes from knowing the true God. As Paul Middleton aptly summarizes the point, "'Put simply, they do not know God, and therefore, despite any action they take, they could never be martyrs. Clement's discourse 'unmakes' these martyrs."⁷¹ So although Clement and Heracleon may disagree as to which martyrs should be rejected because they lack the confession of faith and conduct, they agree on the conceptual apparatus for distinguishing martyrdoms.

I ApocJas dramatizes the understanding of martyrdom articulated by Clement and Heracleon. By displacing James' confession into the divine realms, the text makes clear that the confession of the voice before the authorities is not the ultimate goal. The actual arrest of James reads as anti-climactic because the demonstration of James' true fitness as a martyr has already

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.10.

⁶⁹ As Daniel Boyarin puts it, "If martyrdom is not voluntary, it is not martyrdom." Boyarin, "Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6.4 (1998), 619.

⁷⁰ Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 4.4.

⁷¹ Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom*, 28. See also Annewies van den Hoek, "Clement of Alexandria on Martyrdom," *Studia Patristica* 26 (1993), 324–341.

been established in the dialogue. At the moment of execution, James' demeanor shows that he has understood the teaching of Jesus. Thus he demonstrates his "confession of faith and conduct" in his imitation of Christ. The expansion of the confession serves a similar purpose. The cascading statements of identity bridge the gap between the confession of the voice and the confession of faith and conduct. Far more than a single statement of identity, the "I" statements of *1ApocJas* articulate the text's theology and anthropology. They contain within themselves the justification for martyrdom. When James "confesses" in the *First Apocalypse of James*, he performs in full his inculcation of Jesus' teaching. When James dies, demonstrating his development of dispositions enabling martyrdom, the reader can conclude that James was a virtuous Christian by his words and by his conduct. His words and his conduct are one and the same.

Ancient discourses of martyrdom enabled multiple different positions and produced various disputes. While some of these disputes concerned whether or not any martyrs should be honored, many involved other issues. The topic which motivates *1ApocJas*, within this discourse, is the nature of the virtuous martyr and the nature of true confession. The text implicitly challenges other martyr narratives in which the climax of both the action and the thematic content occurs in an interrogation scene in the arena. The statement *christiana sum*, for *1ApocJas*, does not suffice for confession. The true martyr is the one whose confession articulates the full scope of theological truth, demonstrating by belief and disposition that the martyr has inculcated true knowledge.

Chapter 3: Interpretation of Scripture

In the previous chapter, I argued that the *First Apocalypse of James* narrates James' preparation for martyrdom. He begins fearful of his death and ignorant of the nature of himself, of Christ, and of the highest God. Jesus provides him with revelation, and through the acquisition of true knowledge, James is transformed. The core content of this revelation appears in a long speech which Jesus presents to James in a post-resurrection appearance. In this chapter, I undertake an analysis of scriptural interpretation in *IApocJas* beginning with the same revelation speech. This analysis will then allow a reading of a set of difficult passages which follow after the long revelation speech.

The embedded dialogue in the revelation speech bears several remarkable similarities to the *Gospel of John*, particularly *John* 7–8. This speech reflects a complex and creative reading of *John*. In this reading, *John* 7–8 provides an ethical program of preparation for martyrdom through its Christological revelations. The identity statements of Jesus are taken to constitute a description of the perfected state of the martyr. One learns to imitate Jesus, based on the statements of identity in *John* 7–8, in preparation for martyrdom. This reading underlies the revelation speech in *IApocJas*.

In this revelation speech (19.21–25.14), Jesus provides revelation about the malevolent “rulers” who will capture and interrogate James after his death. *IApocJas* draws a radical distinction between the highest God called “the One Who Is” and subordinate powers of a figure “femaleness” who created a separate power base of rulers (10.8–27 and 22.4–20). The “guard” and “toll collectors” who interrogate James are the underlings of the power called “femaleness.” The revelation is structured as an embedded dialogue, in which Jesus speaks both the questions that James will be asked and the answers that James ought to give. This organization implies that

these words should be memorized and repeated. Readers and hearers are thus implicitly exhorted to engage in practices of ritual repetition in order to prepare for martyrdom.

[When] you fall because of (the) many, one of them will ask you, because he is a guard, “Who are you and where are you from?” You will say to him, “I am the son and I am from the father.” And he will say to you, “Which son and which father?” You will say to him, “The pre-existent father and the son who is in the pre-existent one.” And he will say to you, “Where have you come from?” You will say to him, “From the pre-existent one.” And he will ask <you>, “Why have you come?” You will say, “I have come to all the ones who are mine and the ones who are not mine.” ... And he will say, “Where will you go?” You will say, “I will go to the ones who are mine, to the place where I came from.” If you say these things, you will be saved from all of these.

[20ΤΑ]Ν ΕΚΨΑΝ2Ε 2ΙΤῆ 2Δ2 [ΟΥ]Ν ΟΥῖ ΝΑΨΙΝΕ ΗΜΟΚ Ε[ΒΟ]Λ ᾤ2ΗΤΟΥ ΧΕΥΦ[ΥΛΑΞ ΠΕ] ΧΕ [ᾤ]ΤΚ ΟΥΟΥ Η ΝΤΚ ΟΥΕΒΟ[Λ] ΤΩΝΕ ΝΚΧΟΟC ΝΑC ΧΕ [Α]ΗΟΚ ΠΕ ΠΩΗΡΕ ΑΥΩ ΕΒΟ[Λ 2Ι]Τῆ ΠΩΤ ΑΥΩ CΗΑΧΟ[ΟC] ΝΑΚ ΧΕ ΑΩ ᾤΩΗΡΕ Η ΑΩ ΗΩΤ ΕΚΗΑΧΟΟC Ν[ΑC] ΧΕ ΠΩΤ ΕΤΨΟΟΠ Χῆ ᾤΨ[ΟΡῆ] ΠΩΗΡΕ ΔΕ ΕΤΨΟΟΠ 2ᾤ ΠΕΤΨΟΟΠ Χῆ ᾤΨΟΡΠ ΑΥΩ CΗΑΧΟΟC ΝΕΚ ΧΕ ᾤΤΑΚΕΙ ΤΩΝΕ ΝΚΧΟΟC ΝΑC ΧΕ ΕΒΟΛ 2Η ΠΕΤΨΟΟΠ Χῆ ᾤΨΟΡῆ ΑΥΩ CΗΑΨῆΤ ΧΕ ΕΤΒΕ ΟΥ ΔΕῖ ΝΓΧΟΟC ΧΕ ᾤΤΑΕΙ ΨΑ ΝΕΤΕΝΟΥῖ ΤΗΡΟΥ ΑΥΩ ΝΕΤΕΝΟΥῖ ΑΝ ... ΑΥΩ CΗΑΧΟ[Ο]C ΧΕ 2ΙΕ ΚΝΑΨΚ ΕΤΩΝΕ ΗΚΧΟΟC ΧΕ ΕΕΙ[Ν]ΔΒΩΚ ΨΑ ΝΕΤΕΝΟΥῖ ΝΕ ΕΠΜΑ ᾤΤΑΕΙΕΙ ᾤΜΟC (20.7–21.18)

This passage contains a number of thematic and verbal similarities to passages in the *Gospel of John*, in particular chapters 7–8. While Jesus teaches in the temple in *John* 7.10–24, a debate breaks out as to whether Jesus is the Messiah. Some people argue that Jesus cannot be the Messiah because “we know where this man is from, but when the Messiah comes, no one will know where he is from” (*John* 7.27).¹ Jesus responds, “You know me and you know where I am from. I have not come on my own. But the one sent me is true, and you do not know him. I know him, because I am from him, and he sent me” (*John* 7.29). The discussion then moves from the questions of who Jesus is, whence Jesus has come, and to where he is going. “I will be with you a little longer,” he says, “and then I am going to him who sent me” (*John* 7.33). This teaching causes consternation, and the Gospel reports “the Jews” saying, “Where does this man intend to

¹ Translations NRSV.

go that we will not find him?” (*John* 7.35). *John* 7 makes the case that the central questions about Jesus are these most basic ones—his identity, whence he comes, and where he goes.²

The discussion continues in *John* 8, where, as Wayne Meeks has observed, the topic of Jesus’ origin and destination “becomes the cipher for Jesus’ unique self-knowledge.”³ Jesus proclaims, “My testimony is valid because I know where I have come from and where I am going, but you know not know where I come from or where I am going” (*John* 8.14). The themes of self-knowledge and identity, origin and destination, all come together here. They serve to authorize Jesus. He is the one who knows that he comes from the Father, and his peculiar self-knowledge authorizes his witness and his judgment.

The dialogue in *IApocJas* builds from the themes and topics of *John* 7–8. The questions which are asked of Jesus in *John*, and which the “guard” and “toll collectors” pose in *IApocJas*, concern the same issues of origin and destination. The answers are the same: just as Jesus came from God the Father, so James has come from the Father. Just as Jesus is returning to the Father, so James is going to the place from which he came. Further, Jesus’ authority in *John* 8 is explained by his self-knowledge. James’ self-knowledge, expressed in his answers, will authorize him to escape from these toll-collectors, and defeated, these rulers will “be troubled, and they will blame their own root” (CΕΝΑΩΤΑΡΤῚ ΤΗΡΟΥ ΔΥΩ CΕΝΑΔῆ ΔΡΙΚΕ ΕΤΕΥΗΟΥΝΕ; 22.17–19). James’ soul will then escape the guards. Jesus’ unique authorizing self-knowledge in *John* becomes in *IApocJas* knowledge which James must come to recognize about himself. It is now James’ origin and destination, James’ self-knowledge, which are contained in these words. These, I think, are the central interpretive tendencies evidenced by *IApocJas*. First, the reading

² See Wayne Meeks, “Galilee and Judea in the Fourth Gospel,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 85.2 (1966), 161–163; Meeks, “The Man from Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 91.1 (1972), 60–61.

³ Meeks, “The Man from Heaven,” 61.

IApocJas uses distinctively Johannine terminology also when Jesus says that James has come to “the ones who are mine and the ones who are not mine.” This language echoes the mission of the logos in *John*’s prologue. *John* 1.11–12 reads, “He came to what was his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God.” The Coptic construction used to articulate “the ones who are mine,” ⲛⲉⲧⲉⲛⲟⲩⲓ, is the same that is used to translate the Greek “one’s own,” τὰ ἴδια.⁴ The language of coming to one’s own and recognizing one’s own also appears earlier in *IApocJas*. This earlier passage even more clearly has developed from a reading of *John* 1. As Jesus is explaining his mission to James, he explains he has come “so that the children of the One Who Is may know what is theirs and what is not theirs” (ⲭⲉⲕⲁⲗⲁⲥ ⲉⲣⲉ ⲛⲱⲡⲣⲉ ⲛⲡⲉⲧⲱⲟⲣⲓ ⲉϥⲛⲁⲙⲓⲉ ⲉⲛⲟⲩⲟⲩ ⲁϥⲱ ⲛⲉⲧⲉⲛⲟⲩⲟⲩ ⲁⲛ ⲛ[ⲉ]; 11.5–7).⁵ *John* 1.11–12 connects a set of themes regarding the children of God, the reception of Christ, and the recognition of the people who are one’s own. This concatenation of themes is reconstituted in *IApocJas* 11.5–7.

⁴ Walter Crum, *A Coptic Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939), 260B. Compare John 1.11 and 7.16 in Coptic. George Horner, ed., *The Coptic Version of the New Testament in the Southern Dialect* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911). See also Funk, "The Significance of the Tchacos Codex," 521–523.

70

called to train in the inculcation of knowledge through the repetition of this dialogue. The knowledge they inculcate is the self-knowledge which Jesus presented as his own in *John* 7–8. A similar pattern appears in the reading of *John* 1.11–12. In *John* it was Jesus (or the Logos) who came to “his own” and the ones who recognized Jesus became “children of God.” In *1ApocJas* this distinctive action of the Logos becomes the model for the action of these “children of the One Who Is” who come to learn what is and what is not their own.

The Intertextual Gap: Ethics and Christology

This analysis offers evidence for a textual relationship between the *Gospel of John* and the *First Apocalypse of James*. Such a relationship has previously been postulated by other scholars including M.R. Hillmer and Titus Nagel. Their studies, however, have not considered extensively how and to what purposes the *John* is interpreted. Instead, Hillmer and Nagel were concerned mostly with the possible “Gnostic” character of the passage in *John*.⁶ These studies have noted some sort of textual connection, but they have not worked out a theory or method for understanding this intertextual relationship.

My use of the term “intertextuality” refers to a set of theories which flow from the recognition that texts are dialogical. Texts are engaged with their worlds, interested, and in

⁶ Impressively, Hillmer did not have this passage in the full form we find in *1ApocJas*, but had only a shorter text preserved by Irenaeus. As discussed, Irenaeus’ *Against the Heresies* preserves nearly word-for-word parts of the embedded dialogue in *1ApocJas*. Irenaeus states that he is recording a ritual text that the Valentinian followers of Marcus read to the dying members of their community. Irenaeus’ passage contains only the responses which James is to give, not the questions which he will be asked. The most direct overlaps in language are found in the questions rather than the answers, but Hillmer nonetheless identified the parallel. His argument for a textual relationship is confirmed by *1ApocJas*. Hillmer focused, however, on the question of whether the Marcosian formula might preserve evidence of a “Gnostic” source for the *Gospel of John*. In a more recent evaluation of the evidence, Titus Nagel argued that rather than a Gnostic source for John, this passage of John congenial for a “Gnosticizing” interpretation. M.R. Hillmer, “The Gospel of John in the Second Century” (ThD diss., Harvard Divinity School, 1966), 11–12; Titus Nagel, *Die Rezeption des Johannesevangeliums im 2. Jahrhundert: Studien zur vorirrinäischen Auslegung des vierten Evangeliums in christlicher und christlich-gnostischer Literatur* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2000), 241–243.

dialogue with various other texts.⁷ If there is not one pure text with unity of content and purpose, but instead texts constantly “weave in and out of complex interrelationships,”⁸ then we should approach texts with the assumption that they are gapped and in tension with themselves, as well as in tension with their various textual interlocutors. Julia Kristeva drew out these conclusions in her theory of intertextuality.

If one grants that every signifying practice is a field of transpositions of various signifying systems (an intertextuality), one then understands that its ‘place’ of enunciation and its denoted ‘object’ are never single, complete, and identical to themselves, but always plural, shattered, capable of being tabulated.⁹

Kristeva’s does not theorize that texts “use” “sources,”¹⁰ but rather she argues that texts are characterized by a multiplicity which is never fully internally coherent. One can always “tabulate” the different ways in which different texts are in dialogue within a text, and these dialogues never fully cohere. They are, in Kristeva’s terminology, “plural, shattered.”

Daniel Boyarin, in his *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash*, draws two important conclusions from this theory of intertextuality. Boyarin argues, “Every text is constrained by the literary system of which it is a part and every text is ultimately dialogical in that it cannot but

⁷ This is an insight in Mikhail Bakhtin’s work. As he puts it, “Indeed, any concrete discourse (utterance) finds the object at which it was directed as it were already overlain with qualifications, open to dispute, charged with value, already enveloped in an obscuring mist—or, on the contrary, by the ‘light’ of alien words that have been spoken about it. In is entangled, shot through with shared thoughts, points of view, alien value judgments and accents. The word, directed toward its object, enters a dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment of alien words, value judgments and accents, weaves in and out of complex interrelationships, merges with some, recoils from others, intersects with yet a third group: and all this may crucially shape discourse, may leave a trace in all its semantic layers, may complicate its expression and influence in its entire stylistic profile.” Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* (trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist; Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 276.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 276.

⁹ Julia Kristeva, “Revolution in Poetic Language,” in *The Kristeva Reader* (ed. Toril Moi; trans. Margaret Waller; New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 111.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 111. Kristeva specifically argues against this understanding of “intertextuality”.

record the traces of its contentions and doubling of earlier discourses.”¹¹ Boyarin picks up on the key idea that these dialogical, never fully coherent texts are necessarily products of complex cultural and literary situations, which enable and constrain their interests and directions. What I find particularly useful in Boyarin is his articulation, in relation to midrash, of the intertextual doubling that is endemic to the reading of scripture. “The very fractured and unsystematic surface of the biblical text is an encoding of its own intertextuality, and it is precisely this which the midrash interprets.”¹² The methods of reading which I find in *IApocJas* are not midrashic in a technical sense, but the basic insight that biblical interpreters pick up on the “fractured and unsystematic” nature of biblical texts as their spur to interpretation applies also to *IApocJas*. It is the gaps, tensions, and multiplicities in the biblical text, in particular in the *Gospel of John*, which drive the interpretation found in *IApocJas*

The reading of the *Gospel of John* found in *IApocJas* builds from a gap in the presentation of ethics and Christology which is unresolved in *John*. We should expect intertextual work to be done in such gaps. Where *John* 7–8 is unclear about the relationship between ethics and Christology, the reading of *John* in *IApocJas* produces a full ethical program based on the inculcation of Christological knowledge.

This gap in *John*’s presentation of ethics and Christology has been widely discussed in scholarship on the Gospel. Frank Matera has argued that in *John*, ethics and Christology intersect. For *John*, the believer who has true understanding of the nature of Christ is formed as an ethical subject by means of that understanding. Matera draws this conclusion from a reading of the stories in *John*, particularly in *John* 7–8, in which various people interact with Jesus and

¹¹ Daniel Boyarin, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1990), 14.

¹² *Ibid.*, 15.

either come to believe in him or do not. In coming to know who Jesus is, Matera argues, these people are transformed. “Faith is an ethical action, then, because it requires those who believe to alter the fundamental way they know and understand themselves.”¹³ The formation of the ethical subject, then, occurs in the moment of “faith in Jesus”—that is, the moment in which one recognizes the identity and nature of Jesus. Matera makes this statement most clearly in his conclusion.

The moral teaching of the Johannine Jesus manifests a tremendous confidence in the outcome of faith ... If the world believes in him, all moral decisions will follow. This may explain why Jesus does not make more specific moral demands upon his followers. The one work that God requires is to believe in the one he sent into the world. From this comes the power to love, and all else besides. Ethics has become Christology.¹⁴

Matera argues that the *Gospel of John*’s sketch of moral philosophy appears most clearly in its depiction of various possible responses to Jesus. The various disputants who do not recognize Jesus as a son from God the father in chapters 7–8 also fail also to constitute themselves as ethical subjects based on this recognition. The reader or hearer of *John* who understands their failure is supposed to achieve the recognition and subsequent self-transformation which the characters in John could not achieve.

In my analysis, Matera’s interpretation of *John* bears a clear resemblance to the reading put forward in Heracleon’s *Commentary on John*. This second-century CE text, which is preserved only in fragments in Origen’s *Commentary on John*,¹⁵ appears to have focused on the responses to Jesus of various characters in the Gospel, and looked for an organizing principle to

¹³ Frank Matera, *New Testament Ethics: The Legacies of Jesus and Paul* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 101.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 113.

¹⁵ For the Greek text of Origen’s *Commentary*, see Erwin Preuschen, ed., *Origenes: Der Johanneskommentar* (Vol. 4 of *Origenes Werke*; Leipzig: J. C. Heinrichs, 1903). For translation, see Robert Heine, trans., *Origen: Commentary on the Gospel according to John Books 13–32* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1993).

distinguish these responses.¹⁶ Origen preserves a significant passage from Heracleon's commentary which treats *John* 8.44, in which Jesus tells a group of Jews, "You are from your father the devil, and you choose to do your father's desires." Heracleon argues that these Jews have become children of the devil through their lack of understanding.¹⁷ They failed to understand who Jesus truly is, where he has come from and where he is going. People who fail to recognize Christ become "children of the devil" through that failure of recognition, and not because of some underlying devilish nature.¹⁸ The moment of recognition or misrecognition of Christological truth determines one's ethical nature.¹⁹ For Heracleon, just as for Matera, the relationship of ethics and Christology in the *Gospel of John* is worked out in chapter 7–8. And it

¹⁶ This has led to a significant debate over whether Heracleon uses technical Valentinian categories of "spirit", "soul" and "matter" to distinguish these responses, and in turn whether Heracleon believed that people who held these natures were saved "by nature" or not. I will address the second question briefly, but the first question is immaterial for my purposes. For arguments that Heracleon did not use these technical categories, see Ansgar Wucherpfennig, *Heracleon Philologus: Gnostische Johannesexegese im zweiten Jahrhundert* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 2002), 333–353; Ismo Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism: Myth, Lifestyle, and Society in the School of Valentinus* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 141–144. For the argument that these categories are active for Heracleon, see Einar Thomassen, "Heracleon," in *The Legacy of John: Second Century Reception of the Fourth Gospel* (ed. Tuomas Rasimus; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 173–210.

¹⁷ The articulation of ethics and Christology in John is inextricably related to its depiction of "the Jews." One can see in Heracleon, particularly, the way in which problematic anti-Jewish moments in *John* are expanded and universalized by later interpreters who take "the Jews" as synecdoche for the damned and even the malevolent. *IApocJas* does not explicitly link its reading of *John* 7–8 to the Johannine depiction of Jews and Judaism, which does not appear to be a significant concern for the text. My reading of *IApocJas* does not treat significantly this question of anti-Judaism because it does not appear to be a major thematic concern. These anti-Jewish themes and statements in John require interpretive work from modern readers who ought to avoid expanding upon these passages as Heracleon did. On anti-Judaism in John, see Tina Pippin, "'For Fear of the Jews': Lying and Truth-Telling in Translating the Gospel of John," *Semeia* 76 (1996), 81–97; Reimund Bieringer et al., eds., *Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001); Adele Reinhartz, *Befriending the Beloved Disciple: A Jewish Reading of the Gospel of John* (New York: Continuum Press, 2001).

¹⁸ Origen, *Commentary on John* 20.215 (Heine). The fact that Heracleon does not claim that people are condemned by nature seems to be broadly recognized now in scholarship. Heracleon makes a distinction that people may become children in three ways, "first by nature, second by choice, third by merit." In the case of the Jews whom Jesus condemns, it must be by their choice or merit that they are condemned, because the devil does not give birth by nature. For other readings of Heracleon which emphasize he does not consider people to be saved or condemned "by nature", see Barbara Aland, "Erwählungstheologie und Menschenklassenlehre: Die Theologie des Herakleon als Schlüssel zum Verständnis der Christlichen Gnosis" in *Gnosis and Gnosticism*, 148–169; Thomassen, "Heracleon," 190–192; Dunderberg, 111–114.

¹⁹ Heracleon's reading of John, here bears similarity to Rudolf Bultmann's. Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, (trans. G.R. Beasley-Murray; Oxford: Blackwell, 1971), 157–160.

is these passages which *IApocJas* reads for its articulation of how knowledge of Christ may be made useful for moral formation.

I am using the language of “moral formation” to describe the ethics of *John*, even though it is not precisely Matera’s language. Matera articulates an ethics which focuses on the formation of an ethical subject rather than the precise regulations by which moral actions may be judged. I draw the language of formation from Michel Foucault, who outlined three possible models of the study of ethics. In the study of “moral behaviors,” the scholar would focus on “the extent to which actions of certain individuals or groups are consistent with the rules and values that are prescribed for them by various agencies.” In the study of “codes,” the topic would be “the different systems of rules or values that are operative in a given society or group.” Matera does not appear to be describing an ethics of behaviors or codes. In fact, he emphasizes that John pays little attention to precise codes or behaviors. Rather, what is being described fits with Foucault’s third category:

And finally, a history of the way in which individuals are urged to constitute themselves as subjects of moral conduct would be concerned with the models proposed for setting up and developing relationships with the self, for self-reflection, self-knowledge, and self-examination, for the decipherment of the self by oneself, for the transformations that one seeks to accomplish with oneself as an object.²⁰

Matera argues that in the *Gospel of John*, the transformation of the self occurs in the recognition of Christological truth. Knowledge of Christ is transformative, and one’s entire way of life becomes ethically grounded through the acquisition of this knowledge. In my reading, *John* treats questions of moral formation in Foucault’s sense.

Now, Foucault’s definition of this field of ethics involves more than just transformation. He talks about the models for setting up and developing relationships with the self by which this

²⁰ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 2: *The Use of Pleasure* (trans. Robert Hurley; New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 29.

transformation may occur. Scholars debate whether *John*'s Christological ethics lays out in sufficient detail the means by which the ethical subject is transformed. On one side of the debate, Wayne Meeks argues that the character of Jesus is too otherworldly to serve as a model for formation, and the disciples who make the choice to follow Jesus are not presented as following any rational basis for this decision that could in turn be emulated.²¹ Scholars who disagree with Meeks as to whether *John* "has an ethics" find that precise mechanisms of moral formation are nonetheless difficult to identify in the Gospel. Paradigmatic is Andreas Köstenberger, who describes the ethics of *John* as a "sanctified reductionism."²² In contrast, what I think is evident in this sketch of the debate is that (1) the ethics of *John* are related directly to its Christology, as it is by coming to know the nature of Christ that one is formed as an ethical subject; and (2) *John* 7–8 is a key passage in which this relationship is articulated; but (3) the precise means by which this formation occurs and the precise mechanisms by which this formation depends on one's recognition of Christ are not fulsomely specified in the Gospel.

This important but imprecise relationship between ethics and Christology in *John* creates exactly the sort of gap where we would expect intertextual work to be done. Heracleon's *Commentary on John* provides evidence of another second-century CE text which built a program of ethics and Christology from the gaps in *John* 7–8. Likewise, the *First Apocalypse of James*' reading of *John* responds to the rich but not fully coherent set of connections drawn in *John*

²¹ Wayne Meeks, "The Ethics of the Fourth Evangelist," in *Exploring the Gospel of John* (ed. R. Alan Culpepper and C. Clifton Black; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 318–322. He writes, "The Gospel does not provide moral instruction, as we have observed, nor does its narrative directly model character to be emulated." The evidence of Heracleon and *IApocJas* demonstrates that early readers of *John* took the depiction of both the disciples and Jesus as useful for moral instruction.

²² Andreas Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2009), 524. For other important treatments of ethics and Christology in John, see Wolfgang Schrage, *The Ethics of the New Testament* (trans. David E. Green; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 295–320; D. Moody Smith, "Ethics and the Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel," in *Word, Theology, and Community in John* (ed. John Painter et al; St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2001); Jan van der Watt, "Ethics and Ethos in the Gospel according to John," *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 97 (2006), 147–176.

between ethics and Christology, between the moral formation to which the believer is exhorted and the knowledge about the nature and origin of Christ which drives this formation. In the reading found in *IApocJas*, the Johannine Jesus becomes a moral exemplar for readers and hearers to imitate.²³ Jesus' statement, "I know where I have come from and where I am going," becomes in this reading an articulation of the nature of all people. Reader and hearers must come to understand this statement and then transform themselves in relation to it. The text exhorts readers and hearers to practice inculcation of knowledge toward this ethical transformation. *IApocJas* picks up on a moment of fracture in *John*, where the text is unsystematic in its presentation of ethics and Christology, and it draws from the text a broader, more complete ethical program.

Response to an Anticipated Source-Critical Objection

In the above reading, my primary evidence for an intertextual relationship between *John* and *IApocJas* comes from a section of the long revelation speech on pages 19–23 of the Tchacos Codex text. I need to address the possible objection that *IApocJas* 19–23 may not be original to the text. If *IApocJas* simply contains a passage taken from an unknown source, then it may not be precisely correct to say that *IApocJas* is presenting a reading of *John*. One could say that *IApocJas* merely contains a source which happens to reflect a reading of *John*. I want to address this objection from two perspectives. First, from a source-critical perspective, the majority of interpreters of *IApocJas* consider these passages to have been significantly re-worked in the

²³ On the widespread use of moral exemplars in ancient ethical texts generally, and in Valentinian texts specifically, see Tite, *Valentinian Ethics and Paraenetic Discourse*, 147–163.

production of the text.²⁴ From a source-critical perspective, then, the reading of *John* found on pages 19–23 would have to be taken as original to *IApocJas*. Second, an intertextual reading rejects the notion that a “source” might appear in a text without crucially shaping its meaning. Even if the entirety of *IApocJas* 19–23 reflects the quotation of a source, an intertextual reading of *IApocJas* takes the interpretation of *John* found in these pages as fundamental to the meaning and effects of the text.

Much of this embedded dialogue appears, in a somewhat different form, in Irenaeus’ *Against the Heresies*. Because of the clear verbal equivalences between the text preserved in Irenaeus and this dialogue in *IApocJas*, various source relationships have been hypothesized. The majority scholarly opinion holds that this passage reflects the significantly re-worked use of a source. In Irenaeus’ Valentinian ritual, only the answers to the questions are preserved, while *IApocJas* has a full dialogue structure. That is, *IApocJas* reads “one of them ... will say to you, ‘who are you and where are you from?’ You will say to him, ‘I am a son and I am from the father’” (20.8–13). In the parallel text, Irenaeus has only, “I am a son from the father” (*AH* 1.21.5). The context and the questions appear only in *IApocJas*. Most interpreters have concluded that most likely the passage in Irenaeus is original, a good record of an actual ritual text, and *IApocJas* has surrounded the ritual text with a larger narrative and drawn from the text questions which are at most implicit in the original. This is important because these questions, not the answers, most directly parallel the language of *John* 7–8. The statement of self-knowledge from *John* 8.14 (“I know where I have come from and where I am going”) is repeated in the form of direct questions of *IApocJas* 20.19–20 and 21.18: “where have you come from?”

²⁴ See Brown, “James,” 87–89; Schoedel, “Scripture and the Seventy-Two Heavens of the First Apocalypse of James,” 118; Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed*, 406–409.

and “where will you go?” If the questions are original to *IApocJas*, then the clearest evidence of intertextual relationship is also original to *IApocJas*.

Some interpreters have argued that an original question and answer text was abridged by either Irenaeus or the Valentinians, but preserved in full by *IApocJas*.²⁵ If one follows the source-critical methodology sketched above, then because the reading of John comes from some other chunk of text inserted into *IApocJas*, one would conclude that this passage does not reflect a reading of *John* internal to the logic of *IApocJas*. An intertextual method of reading, however, rejects these source-critical assumptions. A text is always a “field of transpositions” in which various bits and pieces of existing discourse are being arranged and rearranged, and every transposition crucially shapes the text so re-arranged. This process of arrangement or transposition of discourse shapes the text in fundamental ways. If a text is a “field of transpositions,” then everything is in some sense “sourced,” and a text is composed of many sources which serve various purposes.

These intertextual effects can be seen, in *IApocJas*, by consideration of Jesus’ discussion in 11.5–7 of “the children of the One Who Is” who come to recognize “what is theirs and what is not theirs.” This passage occurs early in the text of *IApocJas* and its immediate context does not provide any explanation of what it means to recognize “one’s own.” This passage’s meanings and effects are altered in relation to the revelation speech. Without the revelation speech, we would never learn what it means for the children of the One Who Is to know “what is theirs.” Only the revelation speech explains that “what is theirs” are those people whose origin may be found in the highest God and “what is not theirs” are those people who originate from the secondary power of femaleness. The passage in the long revelation speech, even if it is “sourced” from another document, crucially shapes the meaning and effects of earlier discussions in the

²⁵ Vielleux, *Les deux apocalypses de Jacques*, 85–92; Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism*, 114.

text. Further, we learn from the speech on pages 19–23 that this revelation crucially shapes James’ preparation for martyrdom. The statement by Jesus that he has come “so that the children of the One Who Is may know what is theirs and what is not theirs,” we learn in the revelation speech, refers to the preparation for martyrdom which is exhorted for all Christians. The intertextual relations within the *First Apocalypse of James* significantly determine the meanings and effects of the text, and the use of this embedded dialogue cannot be dismissed as the indifferent placement of a source.

Readings of Scripture in the Passage on the “Seven Women”

This long revelation speech with its embedded dialogue does not conclude the revelations given in *IApocJas*. Rather, James asks a new question about a new set of characters. “Who are the seven women who have become your disciples,” he asks, “and whom all the generations bless?” (ⲛⲓⲙ ⲛⲉ ⲧⲥⲗⲓⲥⲉ ⲛⲥⲗⲓⲙⲉ ⲛⲧⲁⲣ ⲙⲁⲑⲏⲧⲉⲥⲉ ⲛⲉⲕ ⲁⲥⲱ ⲛⲁⲓ ⲥⲉⲡⲙⲁⲕⲁⲣⲓⲗⲉ ⲛⲓⲙⲁⲥ ⲛⲉⲓ ⲛⲓⲅⲉⲛⲁ ⲧⲏⲣⲱ; 25.18–21).²⁶ The discussion which follows contains the final revelation that James receives, before his martyrdom. Its placement at the end of the dialogue indicates the central importance of this passage to *IApocJas*. I will argue that once again a reading of scripture underlies these discussions. Further, the methods of interpreting scripture which organized the reading of *John*—the focus on integrating ethics and Christology—continue to structure the readings of *Isaiah* and *Leviticus* in the following passages.

²⁶ For most of the passages I will discuss in this chapter, the NHC V text is highly fragmentary. As to the general structure of the discussion, it appears just as difficult to parse in the NHC V version. In this passage, the NHC V text differs here in a way that seems to lessen the praise given the women. For my purposes in this chapter, the NHC V text confirms that the introduction of the seven women arises unexpectedly. “Who are the [seven] women who have become your disciples, and look, all women bless you.” (†[CAX]ϥϥ ⲡC2IME NIM NE ⲡTAY[ⲡ NA]ΘHTHC NAK AYW EIC 2[HNTE] CEⲡMAKAPIZE ⲡNOK [ⲡ]ϥI C2IME NIM; V 38.16–20).

This final dialogue is confusing, digressive and not entirely internally coherent. This section begins with James' question, seemingly unprompted, about blessed female disciples. Jesus offers in response a reading of *Isaiah* 11.2–3—cited explicitly in the text—in which he first interprets the “seven spirits” in *Isaiah* as divine powers who inspire prophecy, and then interprets them as honored female disciples. How can these two readings be reconciled? I suggest that these passages reflect the two different modes of scriptural interpretation which were seen previously in the reading of *John* in the embedded dialogue. Once again, the reading of scripture seeks both Christological knowledge and an ethical program based on the imitation of an exemplar. These methods produced a mostly coherent reading of *John*, but they produce readings of *Isaiah* which do not entirely cohere.

In the span of four manuscript pages, Jesus lays out a set of connected readings of scripture. James asks about “seven women who have become your disciples and whom all the generations bless.” Jesus first responds that these seven women were described in scripture.

The seven women, they are the seven spirits who are introduced in this scripture: a spirit of wisdom [and] intelligence, a spirit of counsel [and] strength, [a] spirit of reason and knowledge, a spirit of fear.

†CΑWQΕ ΠC2IME ETΕ NEEI NE CΑWQ ΠΠNA NE NA! EΩAYHTOY EZOYN 2H TE[IT]PΔ]ΦH
OYΠNA NCOΦIA 2[I] M[HT]CABE OYΠNA NCOXH[Ε 2I] Ϛ[O]M [OY]TΠNΔ [N]NOY 2I COO[YNE]
OYΠNA N2OTE (26.4-10)²⁷

This is a citation of a version of *Isaiah* 11.2–3 which closely resembles the text of the Septuagint:

²⁷ The NHC V is fragmentary here, but it was recognized as a citation of *Isaiah* 11.2–3 from the fragments. The precise characteristics of the spirits differ, though they clearly share a basic semantic range. The differences between the two versions, which most likely derive from different translations of the Greek, help demonstrate the independence of the two textual traditions. “A spirit [of wisdom], a [spirit] of thought, a [spirit] of counsel and of their [power], a spirit [of reason], a spirit of knowledge, [a spirit] of their fear” (OYΠNA [NCABE] OYΠNA [HT]MEY[Ε OYΠN]Δ ΠWOXNE MH NQY[COM] OYΠNA[HT]NOYC OYΠNA ΠΓHΩ[CIC] Q[YΠNA] HTETOT[Ε]; V 39.3–8). For the reconstructions here based on parallels in the TC, see Brankaer and Bethge, *Codex Tchacos*, 237.

The spirit of God will rest upon him, a spirit of wisdom and understanding, a spirit of counsel and strength, a spirit of knowledge and piety, and a spirit of the fear of God will fill him.

καὶ ἀναπαύσεται ἐπ’ αὐτὸν πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ πνεῦμα σοφίας καὶ συνέσεως πνεῦμα
βουλῆς καὶ ἰσχύος πνεῦμα γνώσεως καὶ εὐσεβείας ἐμπλήσει αὐτὸν πνεῦμα φόβου θεοῦ

IApocJas’ presentation of these verses is slightly different, as the spirit of piety (πνεῦμα ... εὐσεβείας) is replaced by a spirit of reason ([ΟΥ]ΠΝΑ [Ν]ΗΟΥC), and the “spirit of fear” is included in the list instead of appearing in another line. However, these differences are minor compared to the differences between the Masoretic Hebrew text and both *IApocJas* and the Septuagint. In the Masoretic text, there are only six spirits. The Septuagint and *IApocJas* distinguish between the last two spirits, piety and fear, while the Masoretic text talks about a spirit of fear twice. It reads, “The spirit of the Lord will rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord, and he will delight in the fear of the Lord.” Only in the Septuagint can seven spirits or aspects of the spirit be distinguished, if one takes the “spirit of the fear of the God” from 11.3 as a seventh spirit along with the six listed in 11.2. Such a reading is unavailable from the Masoretic text, and so I conclude that *IApocJas* is drawing from a tradition similar to the Septuagint.²⁸

These divine female spirits, Jesus will explain, have been the cause of prophecy and specifically of the prophetic texts of the Jewish Scriptures. The seven inspired prophecy and more specifically, prophecy about Jesus. To explain the workings of these seven spirits, Jesus contextualizes their work within a short, allusive theological narrative.

When <I> passed by the land of the great ruler, the one who is called Addon, I went up to him, and he was ignorant. And when I left him, he thought of me that I was his son, and he favored me as his own son. And before I appeared in these places, these (spirits) were already among this people, in the place where no prophet spoke without the seven spirits. And these are the seven spirits who have preached about me through the mouths of the

²⁸ See also Bethge and Brankaer, *Codex Tchacos*, 237; Marjanen, “The Seven Women Disciples,” 538–540.

people, just as they were able to speak, because I had not spoken with all strength. But I have come and I have fulfilled (it).

ἡΤΕΡΕ<Ι>ΧΩΩΒΕ ΝΗΚΑΖ ἡΠΝΟΣ ΝΑΡΧΩΝ ΠΕΤΕΨΑΥΜ[Ο]ΥΤΕ ΕΡΩΔΙ ΧΕ ΑΔΔΩΝ ΔΕΙΒΩΚ
ΕΖΟΥΗ ΨΑΡΟΙ ΔΥΩ ΝΤΟΙ ΕΩΟ ΝΑΤΩ[Ο]ΟΥΝΕ ἡ[Τ]ΕΡΙΕΙ ΔΕ ΕΒΟΛ ἡΜΟΙ ΝΕΩΜΕΟΥΕ
ΕΡΟ[ΕΙ] ΠΕ ΧΕ ΔΗΡ ΠΕΩΩΗΡΕ ΔΥΩ ΔΩΧΑΡΙΕ ΝΑΕΙ ΖΩΣ ΠΕΩΩΗΡΕ ἡΜΙΝ ΜΟΙ ΔΥΩ ΔΗΟΚ
ΖΑ ΤΕΖΗ ΕΜΠΑΨΟΥΩΝΖ ΕΒΟΛ ἡΝΕΕΙ ΜΑ ΑΡΑ ΝΕΥΩΟΠ ἡΔΙ ΝΑΕΙ Ζἡ ΠΙΛΑΟΣ ΕΤΕ ΠΑΕΙ
ΠΕ ΠΜΑ ΕΤΕ ΜΠΕΠΡΟΦΗΤΗΣ ΨΑΧΕ ΧΩΡΙΣ ΠΙΣΑΨΩ ἡΠΙΝΑ ΔΥΩ ΝΑΕΙ ΝΕ ΠΙΣΑΨΩ ἡΠΙΝΑ
ἡΤΑΥΤΑΨΕ ΟΕΨ ΕΤΒΗΤ ΖΙΤἡ ΤΤΑΠΡΟ ἡἡΡΩΜΕ ΚΑΤΑ ΘΕ ἡΤΑΥΔἡΔΟΜ ΕΧΟΟΥ ΕΒΟΛ ΧΕ
ἡΠΙΧΩ ἡΤΔΟΜ ΤΗΡΩ [Δ]ἡΟΚ ΔΕ [ΔΕ]ΙΕΙ ΔΕΙΧΩΚ ΕΒΟΛ (26.11–27.2)²⁹

First, Jesus talks about his travels “in the land of the great ruler, who is called Addon.” The name of the ruler in NHC V text is Adonaios (V 39.12), confirming that this Addon is a version of Adonai, one of the names of God. Jesus then relates that the great ruler mistook Jesus for his son. I take this as a parody of the common early Christian claims that Jesus was the son of the God found in Jewish Scriptures. The text is making a little joke. For *IApocJas*, Jesus obviously cannot be the son of the God known as Addon (or Adonaios), because Addon is a power lower than Jesus. The “ruler” Addon should be counted among the “rulers” who are the underlings of the power of “femaleness” rather than of the highest God. So how did people get the idea that Jesus was the son of the ruler, Addon? What happened was that this ruler mistook Jesus for his son, and Jesus never disabused him of the notion. The whole idea that this lower divinity could be the father of Jesus came about through a comic misunderstanding.³⁰

After establishing that the God referred to in the Jewish Scriptures is not necessarily the highest God, the text then needs to explain how it is that prophetic texts may nonetheless be divinely inspired. Jesus, after all, has just cited *Isaiah* as an authoritative text. Jesus explains that this ruler Addon controlled certain lands, and prophets appeared in “these places ... with this

²⁹ The NHC V here is highly fragmentary, but what appears is nearly identical in sense. One notable but slight difference is the name of the great ruler. He is ΑΔΩΝΑΙΟΣ in the Nag Hammadi version (V 39.12).

³⁰ See also Brankaer and Bethge, *Codex Tchacos*, 238–239; Marjanen, “The Seven Women Disciples,” 539.

very people.” I take this as an allusive description of Jewish prophets in the land of Israel. These prophets spoke about Jesus and prepared for him. These prophets, Jesus explains, were able to preach truly because they were inspired by the seven spirits, who are agents of the highest God. Thus, *IApocJas* argues that many references to God in Jewish scripture actually refer to Addon, the ignorant ruler. Only a subset of the references to God refer to the highest God. Jesus is not the son of Addon, but rather he is the son of the highest God, “the One Who Is.” The Jewish Scriptures contain true prophecy because agents of the highest God, these seven spirits, worked through the prophets.

The *Dialogue with Trypho* and the Christological Reading of Scripture

This reading of *Isaiah* 11.2–3 parallels in several aspects a reading of the same passage presented in Justin Martyr’s *Dialogue with Trypho*. The parallels reflect a shared hermeneutic, under which one reads Jewish Scripture in order to seek knowledge about the nature of Christ. One finds this knowledge by identifying multiple divine figures in the scriptures.³¹ The *Dialogue* is a second-century CE text which portrays a dialogue between Justin, who writes himself as the first-person narrator, and a group of Jews represented mostly by Trypho. In chapters 87–88 of the *Dialogue*, Justin is in the midst of laying out a reading of Jewish Scripture which finds Jesus Christ as a second power in heaven alongside God. Justin argues, “We have likewise proved that in many scriptural passages Christ is symbolically called a stone,” and “We have likewise shown

³¹ For the text of the *Dialogue* see Miroslav Marcovich, ed., *Iustini Martyris: Dialogus cum Tryphone* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1997). For translation, Thomas B. Falls, trans., *Dialogue with Trypho* (ed. Michael Slusser; Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2003). On the setting and audience, see Tessa Rajak, “Talking at Trypho,” in *Apologetics in the Roman Empire* (ed. Mark Edwards, Martin Goodman and Simon Price; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 75–80. On the hermeneutic of Justin in the *Dialogue* more generally, see Daniel Boyarin, *Borderlines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 37–73; Bruce Chilton, “Justin and Israelite Prophecy,” in *Justin Martyr and His Worlds* (ed. Paul Foster and Sara Parvis; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 77–87.

that every chrism, whether of oil, or myrrh, or any other balsam compound, was a figure of Christ.”³² For Justin, proper hermeneutical method requires identifying those words and figures which stand for Christ, by which his work and his words have been prophesied, and through which one can come to understand the nature and activity of Christ. Among the key markers that should alert the reader to Jesus’ presence are titles for God or other divine figures. He argues, “[Christ] received from the Father the titles of King and Christ and the first and Angel.”³³ It is not only common objects and actions which figure Christ, but more importantly all these various divine titles.

One can see this Christological hermeneutic at work in the passage that follows. Trypho quotes *Isaiah* 11.1–3, and then asks a question of Justin:

Explain to me the following words of Isaiah: “A shoot shall sprout from the root of Jesse, and a flower shall blossom out of his root. And a spirit of God shall rest upon him, a spirit of wisdom and understanding, a spirit of counsel and fortitude, a spirit of knowledge and piety, and he shall be filled with a spirit of the fear of the Lord.” Now you have admitted that these words were spoken of Christ ... How can you prove that Christ already existed, since he is endowed with these gifts of the Holy Spirit which the above-quoted passages of Isaiah attribute to him as though he had lacked them?³⁴

Justin responds, first, that the gifts were not bestowed upon Christ to fill a lack. The key phrase in the passage, he explains, is “the spirit of the Lord will rest upon him.” Justin interprets “rest” to mean “come to rest” or “be completed.” Thus, *Isaiah* 11.2 tells how “the gifts of the Holy Spirit ... came to an end with [Christ], so that the word has no more prophets among your people

³² *Dialogue* 86.3 (Falls).

³³ *Ibid.*, 86.4.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 87.2. Note that in Justin’s Greek text of *Isaiah* the seven spirits can be distinguished, as in *1ApocJas* and the Septuagint.

as of old.”³⁵ So, in Justin’s reading, the gifts were indeed not bestowed to fill a lack. Rather, the gifts are completed by Christ.

Further, these gifts of the Holy Spirit represent the “powers” by which prophecy has occurred in the past. Justin continues, “Each of your prophets, by receiving one or two powers from God, did and said those things which we have learned from the scriptures.”³⁶ Justin interprets *Isaiah* 11.2 to be speaking about Christ and about prophetic gifts which came to an end with Christ. Justin argues that the prophets were able to prophesy by means of these spirits described in *Isaiah*. The prophets, typically, received only one or two of the spirits. Because of this, these prophets who came before Jesus had inspiration from God, but they had not received the fullness of the gifts. Justin’s expansive list of prophets includes not only the figures counted as prophets in traditional categorization of books of the Bible (i.e. Ezekiel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc), but also Moses, Solomon, and David (87.4). Thus, as Bruce Chilton argues, Justin’s reading of *Isaiah* 11.1–3 serves to explain the inspiration of nearly all of scripture.³⁷ Almost every book of scripture is attributed to a “prophet” by this method. These prophets were able to work because they were inspired by these spirits, but none of the prophets received the fullness of the spirits. Because Christ had upon him the full complement of the spirit, Christ’s coming brought prophecy to completion.

In *1ApocJas*, we find not only a reading of the same passage of *Isaiah*, but also nearly identical conclusions drawn about the nature of prophecy and scripture. Jesus states that prophets prophesied by means of these spirits. “These spirits were among this people, where no prophet spoke without these seven spirits” (26.20–24). Further, people who prophesied by means of these

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 87.3.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 87.4.

³⁷ Chilton, “Justin and Israelite Prophecy,” 79–80.

spirits prophesied only “as far as they were able to speak, because I had not yet spoken with all strength. But I came and fulfilled (it)” (27.1–3). The prophets who are responsible for the Jewish Scriptures did not prophecy fully, but only “as far as they were able to speak.” So, just as in the *Dialogue*, the spirits of *Isaiah* 11.2 inspire the production of scripture. And further in parallel to Justin’s reading, this scripture is divinely inspired but does not have the fullness of God within it, and so the fulfillment of this scripture comes about with Jesus.

The comparison to Justin, I think, helps to identify one of the methods of scriptural interpretation reflected in *IApocJas*. By this method, one seeks within scriptural texts knowledge about the nature of Christ. The implicit argument of both Justin and *IApocJas* is that one ought to read scripture for knowledge about Christ. In fact, both argue through readings of *Isaiah* that scripture tells us that its subject is Christ. As Jesus puts it in *IApocJas*, the prophets “preached about me” (26.26). The topic of the Jewish Scriptures, for both Justin and *IApocJas*, is Christ. Further, both Justin and *IApocJas* distinguish between multiple divine figures in the Jewish Scriptures. In neither case does this identification of multiple divine powers suggest a non-monotheistic theology. Both Justin and *IApocJas* identify secondary, lower divine powers, while maintaining the transcendence of the highest God. In both texts, the different names of God serve as evidence of multiple divine figures in the heavens. The “him” in *Isaiah* 11.2–3 refers to Christ and to his role as the one who brings prophecy to completion. The spirits in this passage can then be distinguished from Jesus. These other divine powers have been active historically and have enabled the production of scriptural texts which contain knowledge about Jesus. *IApocJas* makes a similar distinction between Jesus and the spirits of prophecy, but *IApocJas* adds a third distinction by arguing that Addon was not the highest God but instead a secondary ruler. This

section thus exemplifies the Christological hermeneutic found in *I ApocJas*, which it shares with Justin.

Ptolemy's *Letter to Flora* and the Ethical Reading of Scripture

The identification of multiple divine figures in the heavens accords with a short passage earlier in *I ApocJas*. James is praying alone after the crucifixion of Jesus, and Jesus appears to him. James ceases his prayer. Jesus praises James, saying, “already you have been released, so that you know me and you know yourself and you ceased the prayer that the Just God prays” (ΗΔΗ ΧΕ ΔΥΚΑΔΚ ΕΒΟΛ ΕΚΗΔCOΥΩΝΤ ΔΥΩ ΗΚCOΥΩΗΚ ΔΥΩ ΗΚΚΩ ΖΩΚ ΝΤΠΡΟCΕΥΧΗ ΤΔΕΙ ΝΤΑCΤΩΒΖ ΝΗΟC ΝΒΙ ΠΗΟΥΤΕ ΝΔΙΚΑΙΟC; 18.21–25). The passage claims, then, that there is a secondary God who is not evil, but who is subordinate to the highest God. To this divinity traditional pieties of prayer have been (mis)directed. Christians, the passage implicitly argues, should cease these traditional devotions to a lower God and direct their prayer instead to the highest God. The God who had been the object of traditional piety and prayer among devout Jews seems like the clear referent of this discussion as well. In both cases, the God named in Jewish Scriptures may not be the highest God but a secondary, imperfect, mistaken deity.

This naming of a secondary “just God” suggests a parallel to Ptolemy's *Letter to Flora*. The *Letter to Flora* is preserved in Epiphanius of Salamis' *Against the Heresies* book 33,³⁸ and it takes up as its explicit subject the proper method of reading what it calls “the law,” referring to

³⁸ On the text of the *Letter to Flora*, see Gilles Quispel, ed., *Lettre à Flora: Analyse, texte critique, traduction, commentaire et index grec* (SC 24; Paris: Cerf, 1966). For translation see Bentley Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures* (New York: Doubleday, 1987), 306–315.

the Pentateuch of Moses.³⁹ Ptolemy presents himself as offering a fair and balanced middle position between two extremes. When Christians discuss how to interpret scripture, Ptolemy says, some incorrectly claim that the law comes from the perfect God, despite the obvious imperfections of the law.⁴⁰ Some other Christians assert that the law has come from the adversary, the devil, even though obviously it contains just teaching. The devil could not be responsible for just teaching.⁴¹ Having rejected these positions as clearly flawed, Ptolemy proceeds to stake out a position between them. He presents two threefold divisions. First, the authorship of the law is divided between God, Moses, and the elders.⁴² Second, the law of God contains pure but imperfect legislation, legislation interwoven with injustice, and legislation meant to be interpreted symbolically.⁴³ The God who established a law which is imperfect, even at times interwoven with injustice, Ptolemy argues, could not be the highest God or the devil. Instead, this must be an intermediate figure who is merely just. “A being that is in a state intermediate between these and is neither good, nor evil and unjust, might well be properly called just, being a judge of the justice that is his.”⁴⁴ Thus Ptolemy explains the existence of a “just God” like the one Jesus mentioned in *IApocJas*.

This just God provides the most obvious point of comparison between the two texts. Both texts reflect readings of Jewish Scripture which strive to identify multiple, distinct divinities in

³⁹ On the reading of scripture in Ptolemy, see Francis T. Fallon, “The Law in Philo and Ptolemaeus: A Note on the *Letter to Flora*,” *Vigilium Christianae* 30 (1976), 45–51; Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism*, 77–94; Tuomas Rasimus, “Ptolemaeus and the Valentinian Exegesis of John’s Prologue,” in *The Legacy of John*, 145–172.

⁴⁰ Ptolemy, *Letter to Flora* 33.3.4.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* 33.3.5

⁴² *Ibid.* 33.4.1

⁴³ *Ibid.* 33.5.1–2

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 33.7.6 (Layton).

the biblical text. In the *Letter to Flora*, this process of identification and distinction uses the words of Jesus, mostly from the *Gospel of Matthew*, to sort the legal codes according to their righteousness. Ptolemy explains, for instance, that in *Matthew* 5.39, “the commandment of ‘an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth,’ which is interwoven with injustice and itself involves an act of injustice, was abolished by the savior with injunctions to the contrary.”⁴⁵ Jesus provides the key to this interpretation. Jesus’ statements that certain laws have been perfected and that certain laws should be understood based on meaning in the heart lead Ptolemy to create parallel distinctions in his typology. By using Jesus’ words as the key to the interpretation, Ptolemy finds in the authorship of the Jewish Scriptures an intermediate divine figure who can be responsible for the just but imperfect legislation that Jesus re-interprets.

The second thing I want to highlight, in this comparison, is how the modern category of “ethics” can be used to describe the interests of both *IApocJas* and the *Letter to Flora*, even while they do quite different work. This is why I have made use of Michel Foucault’s distinctions between different modes of the study of ethics. Ptolemy focuses on the content of law codes, legislation regarding what one ought to do or not to do. One must read the Jewish Scriptures in order to determine which acts are permitted and which are outlawed, and it is with this goal always in mind that the text sets out to determine which rulings are authoritative, to what degree, and for what reason. This discussion concerns the study of ethical codes, the production of rules for evaluating behavior.

In *IApocJas*, the embedded dialogue provides ethical exhortation in a quite different way. There is no elaboration of a code by which behavior might be judged. Instead, Jesus exhorts James to inculcate knowledge about himself and the nature of God. By inculcating this knowledge, James will be transformed as a subject of ethics. This transformation will produce in

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 33.6.5 (Layton).

James dispositions so that he may be prepared for martyrdom. The reading in *IApocJas* is ethical, then, but in a different way from the reading in the *Letter to Flora*. The former focuses on the formation of the self, the latter on the determination of codes of forbidden and acceptable behavior.

The Three Women as Moral Exemplars and the Ethical Reading of *Isaiah* 11.2–3

The ethical hermeneutic for the reading of scripture, which the long revelation speech reflected, may also be seen in the following discussion about the seven women. Jesus' initial response to James' question about these women adduces *Isaiah* 11.2–3 in order to argue that these women are spirits of prophecy described in scripture. In the very next passage, *IApocJas* presents a second, parallel reading of the same text focused on the presentation of moral exemplars. James says that he accepts the teaching Jesus has provided about the seven spirits, but he has a further question. "Since one has considered the seven all together as a group, do you have some being more honored than others?" (27.7–9). James states that the earlier interpretation considered who the seven spirits were collectively. They were divine agents who inspired prophecy. He explains that his question now concerns the seven as distinct figures, and he asks whether there are certain of them who are particularly honored. Jesus first praises James lavishly. Then he praises even more lavishly three of the women. This is an extension of the earlier interpretation, as Jesus continues speaking of the seven who were described in *Isaiah* 11.2.

Be persuaded by this other example, which is that of Salome, Mary, and Arsinoe, whom I will introduce to you, since [they] are worthy of the One Who Is. For they have become sober, and they have [cast away] the blindness which was in their minds, and they have come to know who I am.

Ṗ ΠΘΕCΘΑΙ ΟΝ ΜΠΕΕΙΚΕΟΥΑ ΕΤΕ CΑΛΩΜΕ ΜΗ ΜΑΡΙZΑΜΜΗΝ ΔΥΩ ΔΡCΙΝΟΗ ΝΑΙ ΕΤΝΑṖ
CΥΝΖΙCΤΑ ΜΗΔΥ ΝΕΚ Ε[Υ]ΜΠΩΑ ΜΠΕΤΩΟΟΠ ΚΑΙ ΓΑΡ ΔΥṖ ΝΗΦΕ ΔΥΩ ΔΥ[Η]ΟΥΧΕ [Ε]ΒΟΛ
ΝΤΗ[Η]ΤΒΛΛΕ ΕΤ2Η [Π]ΕΥ2ΗΤ ΔΥ[Ω] ΔΥṖ ΝΟΪ ΗΜΟΪ ΧΕ ΔΗΟΚ ΟΥΟ[Υ] (27.25–28.5)⁴⁶

I take this passage as an exhortation to imitate the three women. Jesus says, “let yourself be convinced by this other (example).”⁴⁷ He then explains that he introduces these women to James for four reasons. First, they have become “worthy of the One Who Is.” Second, they “have become sober.” Third, they “have cast away the blindness that was in their minds.” Finally, they have “come to know who I am.” Each of these descriptions of the women has a clear analogue in earlier statements by Jesus about what James ought to do. What these women have achieved, then, is precisely what Jesus has exhorted James to achieve. James has to become “worthy of [his] own root” ([Κ]ἸΠΩΑ ΝΤΕΚΝΟΥΝΕ ΜΗΙΝ ΗΜΟΚ; 27.13–14). His “root,” under the text’s anthropology, refers to the source of the essential aspect of himself, the One Who Is. Jesus earlier exhorted James to “attain to the One Who Is” (ΚΝΑΠΩ2 ΩΑ ΠΕΤΩΟΟΤ; 13.23–24),⁴⁸ in a similar construction with a similar goal of exhorting development of the self. Jesus has praised James for having “cast away the cup of drunkenness” (ΔΚΝΟΥΧΕ ΕΒΟΛ [Η]ΜΟΚ ΜΠΠΟΤΗΡΙΟΝ

⁴⁶ At line 28.3, the Kasser/Wurst edition here reads [Τ]ΟΥΧΦ, which would have the meaning “they have been saved from the blindness which was in their minds.” As best as I can tell, the space where they reconstruct a *tau* could also have fit a *nu*, and the reconstruction of the omicron at the end of the word is based on a small piece of an arc which could also be part of an epsilon, not an omicron. ΤΟΥΧΟ and ΝΟΥΧΕ are both possible readings, and since the text has used the phrase “cast away” in a nearly identical phrase before, I think mine is the more likely reconstruction. One other difference worth noting here is the verb in the sentence. While in the Tchacos Codex Jesus clearly exhorts James to “be convinced by” (Ṗ ΠΘΕCΘΑΙ) the example of the three women, the NHC V version has the more ambiguous ΤΩΤ Ν2ΗΤ. Most translations previous to the publication of the Tchacos Codex took ΤΩΤ Ν2ΗΤ as a transitive verb meaning something like “encourage,” but Antti Marjanen correctly noted that this form in the imperative is much more likely to be intransitive, meaning “be persuaded by.” The Tchacos Codex confirms his interpretation. See Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 132–135. I will discuss the names of the three women and their parallels in chapter 5.

⁴⁷ On the argument that the ambiguous “ΠΕΕΙΚΕΟΥΑ” refers to the presentation of an example, see Petersen, *Zerstört Die Werke Der Weiblichkeit!*, 250–251.

⁴⁸ The NHC V version here has an identical translation. The Coptic is slightly different, but only in unimportant ways, such as using a Greco-Coptic verb in place of the Coptic and using a different but equivalent preposition (ΕΚΝΑΚΑΤΑΝΤΑ Ε2ΡΑΪ ΕΠΕΤΩΟΟΠ; V 27.6–7).

ⲙⲓⲧⲧⲓⲛ; 27.15–16),⁴⁹ and these women have gone further and “become sober.” Third, in the same passage earlier in the text where Jesus told James that he must attain to the One Who Is, Jesus explained that James could not attain to the One Who Is unless he “cast away the blindness that is in [his] mind” (ⲛⲕⲛⲟϥⲭⲉ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛⲧⲙⲏⲧⲃⲗⲗⲉ ⲉⲧⲧⲛ ⲡⲉⲕⲧⲏⲧ; 13.20–21).⁵⁰ The wording is identical. Finally, these women have come to know who Jesus is. This has a parallel in the very first page of *IApocJas*, where Jesus explains to James how he will give him the knowledge he seeks. Jesus says, “[I] will tell you who I am” (ⲉⲉⲓⲛⲁⲧⲁⲙⲟⲕ ⲭⲉ ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲛⲏⲓ; 10.7). If James receives the knowledge which Jesus reveals to him through their dialogue, then he, like these women, will come to know Jesus’ identity. These women embody precisely the state to which James ought to attain, which he has begun to realize. They are models for imitation. This passage exemplifies *IApocJas*’ ethical hermeneutic. The text reflects readings of scripture which uncover moral exemplars, figures to imitate in ethical practice. Through this hermeneutic, *Isaiah* 11.2–3 provides practical knowledge to readers in the form of figures who are to be not only honored but imitated. The readers learn from the text how they ought to organize their lives and whom they ought to imitate in their practices of the self.

The two readings of *Isaiah* 11.2–3 which the text puts forward do not initially appear consistent with each other. In the Christological reading, the seven spirits were interpreted as divine powers who preceded Jesus. In the ethical reading, the spirits represent several women who are disciples of Jesus, following him. This divergence can be explained by the two quite different hermeneutics applied to the scriptural text. The Christological reading identifies Jesus

⁴⁹ The NHC V version here differs slightly, as it no longer refers to the cup of “drunkenness”, but refers instead to “bitterness.” “You cast away from yourself the cup, this is bitterness” ([ⲁⲕ]ⲛⲟϥⲭⲉ ⲓⲁⲣ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛⲏⲓⲟⲕ ⲛⲓⲡⲁ ⲡⲓⲟⲧ ⲡⲁⲓ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲓⲱⲛⲉ; V 40.13–15). The parallelism does not work as well in the Nag Hammadi version.

⁵⁰ NHC V here is nearly identical. “Until you cast away blind thought” (ⲱⲁⲛⲧⲉⲕⲏⲧⲟϥⲭⲉ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛⲏⲓⲟⲕ ⲛⲧⲧⲁⲓⲁⲛⲟⲓⲁ ⲛⲃⲉⲗⲗⲏ; V 27.3–4).

as the fulfillment of prophecy and identifies a secondary, mistaken ruler who was misunderstood in Jewish Scripture as the highest God. It locates within this heavenly drama divine female spirits whose work is completed with the coming of Jesus. The ethical reading identifies female disciples as proper objects of imitation in practices of moral formation. The seven women are first described as divine powers which preceded Jesus and then as disciples who followed him.

The modes of reading which produce these two interpretations of *Isaiah* are the same modes of reading which extracted an exhortation to preparation for martyrdom from the *Gospel of John*. As argued above, the reading of scripture in *IApocJas* develops from a textual gap in *John*. The Gospel consistently weaves together ethics and Christology, but the text lacks an explanation as to how one should understand the relationship of ethics and Christology. This problem is solved in the reading presented in *IApocJas*. In this text, Jesus' self-knowledge from *John* becomes knowledge which the Christian must come to know about himself or herself. The Christological and ethical modes of reading complemented each other in the interpretation of *John*. In the reading of *Isaiah*, the text reflects the same methods of reading which enabled this interpretation of *John*. *IApocJas* presents first a Christological reading and then an ethical reading of *Isaiah*. The underlying logic of the text, here, works by switching from one mode of scriptural interpretation to another. *IApocJas* does not suggest that these two readings contradict, but rather it seems that both readings serve the underlying goals of the text. They provide knowledge which can be useful for preparation for martyrdom.

The Ethical and Christological Reading of *Leviticus*

Directly after presenting the three women to James as objects of imitation, Jesus begins another allusive reading of scripture in which he compares himself to a priest. The point of

connection here appears to be the notion of transformation. The women have been transformed to become ideal disciples for ethical imitation. Jesus invokes a reading of *Leviticus* to describe his crucial role in this transformation.

This is according to the foreknowledge of the Father, because he sent me as a priest. And in every place are reckoned the firstfruits and the firstborn [in] the [great sacrifice]. One receives the firstfruits and assigns sacrifices and offerings. But I do not act in this way. Rather, I receive the firstfruits of the defiled ones so that I may send them up [un]defiled, so that the true power is revealed. For the defiled has separated from the undefiled and the work <of the female> has attained to the male.

ΠΑΙ ΚΑΤΑ ΤΕΠΡΟΝΟΙΑ ΜΠΙΩ[Τ] ΧΕ ΑΓΤΗΟΟΥ ΜΟΙ ΠΟΥΗΗΒ ΑΥΩ [2]Μ ΜΑ ΝΙΜ ΣΕΗΠ ΝΤΕ ΝΑΙ Ν[Ν]ΑΠΑΡΧΗ ΑΥΩ ΠΩΡΠ ΜΗΙΣΕ 2[Μ ΠΕ]Ε[ΠΗΟ6 ΠΘ]ΥΟC⁵¹ ΕΤΕ ΠΑΕΙ Π[Ε] ΠΑΧΙ ΝΗΑΠΑΡΧΗ ΑΥΩ ΠΑ[Π]ΩΠΕ ΠΘΥCΙΑ 2Ι ΠΡΟCΦΟΡ[Α] ΑΝΟΚ ΔΕ ΝΤΕΕΙ2Ε ΑΝ ΑΛΛ[Α] ΕΠΑΙΧΙ ΝΗΑΠΑΡΧΗ ΠΗΕΤΧ[Α2]Η ΝΤΑΤΗΟΟΥCΟΥ ΕΥΟ Ν[ΑΤ]ΧΩ2Η Χ[Ε]ΚΑΔC ΕCΗΑΟΥΠΗ2 ΕΒΟΛ ΝΙ ΤCΟΜ ΠΗΕ ΧΕ ΑΠΧΩ2Η ΠΩΡΧ ΕΒΟΛ ΕΥΗΠΤΑΤΧΩ2Η ΑΥΩ ΦΩΒ <ΝΤΕC2>ΜΕ ΑΚΚΑΤΑΝΤΑ ΕΦΑΥΤ (28.6–20)⁵²

Jesus identifies here a distinction between the defiled and the undefiled. These women have achieved a transformation of the self which is characterized here as a movement from being defiled to becoming undefiled. Jesus' priestly action produces that transformation. In the Nag Hammadi version, Jesus' transformative action is directly contrasted with the action of "priests of this world" (ΠΟΥΗ[ΗΒ ΠΠΙΚΟCΜΟ]C; V 41.6).⁵³ In the TC version as reconstructed by Brankaer and Bethge, there still appears to be a contrast to worldly priests, as Jesus says "I do not act in this way." Jesus claims that typical priests receive firstfruits and offerings but do not transform them, while Jesus transforms offerings rather than sending them up as is. I think this contrast is best explained by reference to the sacrificial laws of *Leviticus*. It is regularly required in

⁵¹ This is a more likely reconstruction than is suggested by Kasser and Wurst. See Brankaer and Bethge, *Codex Tchacos*, 124, 234–235.

⁵² Where I have emended the text to read "the work <of the female>," the Tchacos Codex reads "true work" (ΦΩΒ ΠΗΕ). Nag Hammadi Codex V, which is luckily extant for a few lines at this point, reads "the work of femaleness" ([Φ]ΩΒ Π[Π]ΗΠΤC2ΗΕ; NHC V 41.17). I think it is most likely that the Tchacos Codex has been altered by a scribal error. I will discuss this reading in chapter 5, pages 129–133, 141–142.

⁵³ The reconstruction is not certain, and I don't want to rest too much on this lacuna.

Leviticus that sacrificial offerings be “unblemished.”⁵⁴ In this reading of the sacrificial codes, the sacrifice begins in a perfect state, without blemish or fault or defilement. Jesus’ action as a priest is different because he takes that which is not perfect, that which is instead blemished and defiled, and he transforms it to become unblemished and undefiled.

Now, “unblemished” and “undefiled” are not precisely the same word or concept. In the Septuagint, “unblemished” is rendered ἄμωμος, while the Coptic ⲁⲧⲭⲱⲛ usually translates the Greek ἀμιάντος.⁵⁵ However, these terms do share the same broad semantic range in ancient Christian literature. This can be seen by comparison to a passage in the *First Epistle of Peter*. In the *1 Peter* 1.18–19, there is a short sacrificial metaphor.⁵⁶ Jesus is compared to an “unblemished” offering who is offered up for the world. “You know that you were ransomed from your futile ways inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish.” A reading of the above-referenced passages from *Leviticus* clearly underlies this passage. It uses the same word ἄμωμος as found in the Septuagint, and it draws a simple one-to-one reading in which the sacrificial offering in *Leviticus* represents the “sacrificed” Jesus whose death performs the same action once and for all.⁵⁷ In the same passage of *1 Peter*, the reader or hearer is exhorted to come to receive an “undefiled” (ἀμιάντον) inheritance, by becoming sober and by exchanging a “perishable” inheritance for one that comes from the “unblemished” sacrifice of Jesus (1.4, 1.18). The logic works by connecting the “unblemished” sacrifice of Jesus to the “undefiled”

⁵⁴ *Leviticus* 1.3, 1.10, 3.1, 3.6, etc.

⁵⁵ Crum, *A Coptic Dictionary*, 797b–798a.

⁵⁶ On this metaphor, see Paul J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 92–93; 114–129; Paul W. Felix, “Penal Substitution in the New Testament: A Focused Look at 1 Peter,” *The Masters Seminary Journal* 20.2 (2009), 177–183.

⁵⁷ Felix, “Penal Substitution,” 182.

inheritance which can be achieved through that sacrifice. *I Peter* provides clear evidence, then, of another early Christian reading of *Leviticus* which connects the “unblemished” nature of the proper sacrifice with an “undefiled” quality which can be achieved by the Christian, through Jesus.

At the same time as *IApocJas* lays out this Christological reading of *Leviticus*, the text also presents an ethical reading. Jesus effects, in his role as a new priest, a transformation of his disciples from defilement to undefilement. In the previous passage, Jesus explained how these women had been formed as ethical subjects, and he exhorted James to imitate them. The three women had “cast off the blindness which was in their minds,” and they had “become sober” and “come to know” Christ. This passage now gives a further explanation of this transformation. It was through the power of Christ as a new priest that these transformations were possible. The women who have been so transformed are the ones whom James, and by extension also the readers and hearers of the text, are called to imitate. I argue that this passage reflects a second combination of ethical and Christological readings of scripture. The women have become perfected moral exemplars through the priestly action of Christ. This reading links the Christological to the ethical. The Christological reading of *Leviticus* treats this text as an oblique reference to Christ’s work in the world, and this work has been produced exemplars for ethical imitation.

This reading produces an important transformation also in the text’s exhortation to martyrdom. The depiction of Christ has shifted. In the revelation speech, the Christological and ethical modes of interpretation fit together neatly. The I-statements of Jesus in *John* 7–8 were read to provide revelation about the nature of Christ, as well as knowledge about the nature of the human person. *IApocJas* implicitly exhorted readers and hearers to inculcate this

Christological knowledge as self-understanding. James will repeat to his interrogators the self-knowledge which was presented as uniquely Christological in *John*. In the reading of *Leviticus*, Christ no longer appears as a moral exemplar. Here, it is the women who are objects of imitation, while Christ is an actor in the divine realms who works, in priestly fashion, to transform these women into “undefiled” moral exemplars. What James is meant to imitate, in the text’s ethical reading of scripture, is not the sacrificial action of Christ the new priest, but the undefiled state of the women transformed by the action of Jesus. In combining the ethical reading of scripture into harmony with the Christological, *1ApocJas* shifts its ethical program from an imitation of Christ to an imitation of women. Boyarin had noted how the intertextuality of the biblical text is encoded by its compilation, and here we see the effects of readings of scripture that seek to harmonize *John*, *Isaiah*, and *Leviticus*. The complexity and heterogeneity of these texts, and the multiple methods of reading which are applied to them, produce not one perfectly unified reading, however, but a variety of possible readings. The integration of these readings shifts the text’s exhortation to martyrdom in a significant way.

Chapter 4: Sexual Difference and Valentinian Theology

Since you asked about femaleness, listen: Femaleness existed, but she did not exist from the beginning. She created [powers] and gods for herself. Thus, the One Who [Is] exists from the beginning, and femaleness exists but does not exist from the beginning.

ΕΠΕΙΔΗ [Δ]ΚΩ[Ι]ΗΞ ΕΤΒΕ ΤΗΝΤΕΣΙΜΕ ΣΩΤ[Ι] ΝΕΣΨΟΟΠ [ΠΕ] ΑΛΛΑ ΝΕΣΨΟΟΠ
ΑΝ ΠΕ ΧΝ ΉΨΟΡΠ ΔΣΤΑΜΙΟ ΝΑC ΠΖΗΔ[ΟΜ] ΗΝ ΖΗΝΟΥΤΕ ΠΕΤΨΟ[ΟΠ] ΔΕ ΕCΨΟΟΠ
ΧΝ ΠΨΟΡ[Π] ΤΗΝΤΕΣΙΜΕ ΖΩΩC CΨΟΟΠ ΑΛΛΑ ΧΝ ΉΨΟΡΠ ΑΝ (10.19–27)¹

In the preceding chapters I have interpreted *IApocJas* with reference to James' martyrdom which concludes the narrative. In this chapter, I will read *IApocJas* from the beginning, and I will focus my interpretation on the category of "femaleness" and its peculiar presentation on the first page. The questions raised there concerning the nature of the divine realms and the creation of the world continue to be addressed through the remainder of the text. Jesus continually identifies "femaleness" and the sexual differentiation of the divine realms as the topics of his revelation. *IApocJas* can be read as an extended discourse on the topic of femaleness and sexual difference.

The initial discussion of femaleness lays out in broad strokes the terms of the theology to follow. Before the coming into existence of femaleness, there was only the One Who Is. At this point, Jesus explains, "Nothing existed except the One Who Is. He is [un]nameable [and] [in]describable [among those who] are or will be" (ΝΕΜΗ ΛΑΟΥΕ ΨΟΟΠ [ΕΙ]ΜΗΤΙ ΠΕΤΨΟΟΠ
Ο[ΥΑΤ Τ]ΡΑΝ ΕΡΟC ΠΕ [ΔΥΩ ΟΥΑΤ]ΨΑΧ[Ε Ε]ΡΟC ΠΕ [ΖΗ ΝΑΕΙ ΕΤ]ΨΟΟ[Π] Η ΝΕΤΝΑΨΩ[ΠΕ];
10.8–12). Because of the transcendence of the One Who Is, this highest God cannot be named or described. Femaleness holds a subordinate position to the One Who Is. The One Who Is has existed from the beginning, while femaleness once did not exist and only has later come into

¹ The NHC version is nearly complete here, and nearly identical to the Tchacos Codex in sense. The somewhat confusing construction "she prepared powers and gods for herself" ([ΔC]CΟΒΤΕ ΝΑC ΠΖ[Ε]ΝCΟΜ ΗΝ ΝΟΥΤΕ; V 24.30) is better explained by the TC "she created" (ΔCΤΑΜΙΟ).

being. It seems that there was a time when femaleness was not. Further, femaleness “created powers and gods for herself” (10.23–24) and this creation took place separately from the One Who Is. After this short discourse, the dialogue moves on to a discussion of James’ fear and ignorance. In order for James to overcome his fear, he must acquire knowledge about the divine realms and about humanity. Because the creation of humanity follows from the creation by femaleness, it turns out that the content of this knowledge also concerns the nature of femaleness.

The explicit reprise of the theme of sexual difference takes place during the theological revelation in the post-resurrection speech (19.21–23.10). This revelation speech consists primarily of an embedded dialogue. Jesus tells James that he will be interrogated by various malevolent forces and he provides for James the responses with which he can triumph over them. Jesus explains that certain “toll collectors” who “take the soul” (ῥῆτελωνησ ... εὔρι νῆτ’ γχι, 20.3–6) will interrogate James, and they will ask who he is. James must answer, “I am the son, and I am from the father” ([Δ]νοκ πε πωηρε δγω εβολ ριτῆ πωτ, 20.12–13). He will then explain what these names mean: “The Father Who Is from the beginning, and the son who is in the One Who Is from the beginning” (πωτ ετωοοπ χῆ ῆω[ορῆ] πωηρε δε ετωοοπ ρῆ πετωοοπ χῆ ῆωορῆ, 20.16–18). Here Jesus uses the same terms to speak of the God who was introduced at the opening of the dialogue. The “One Who Is from the beginning” is reprised here as “the Father Who Is from the beginning.”

With these words, James will locate himself within the drama of the divine realms. Because James must learn and come to understand these revelations, he becomes, in imitation of Jesus, the son who is in the One Who Is from the beginning. This re-statement of the text’s theology also effects a subtle difference in the gendering of the divine realms. In the first

passage, Jesus used non-gendered language to describe a God to whom qualities could not be predicated. In the second passage, God is the Father and his people are his sons.² This gendering of the divine realms was perhaps suggested by the initial passage, in which the power “femaleness” separated itself from the One Who Is. Through this rearticulation of the nature of God, a key set of relationships in the text become marked by sexual differentiation. The highest God has aspects of maleness, while femaleness characterizes lower divinities. Jesus is a son of this highest God, and Christians like James can attain to his position and become sons themselves. Perfection seems to attend to the male rather than the female.

As the dialogue continues, it expands the set of relationships defined through sexual difference. The entire state of the cosmos and humanity has been structured by the sexual differentiation of the divine realms. We resume here the embedded dialogue between James and the toll collectors. They will ask James what his mission in the world has been. James is to explain, “I have come to those who are mine and those who are not mine” (ΝΙΤΑΕΙ ΩΑ ΝΕΤΕΝΟΥΙ ΤΗΡΟΥ ΔΥΩ ΝΕΤΕΝΟΥΙ ΔΗ, 20.23–25). Then James will explain what he means by “those who are not mine.”

² A reading of the *Gospel of John* underlies both of these points. In James’ self-identification as a son from the father, he echoes Jesus’ statements of identity from *John*. James has taken on the qualities of the Johannine Jesus. His search for knowledge and his work of self-transformation conclude in his taking on the qualities of Jesus. Likewise, the description of God as “the father”, in this context, reads as Johannine theological language. The father-son relationship between God and Christ in *John* draws attention to the gendered character of these terms. Adele Reinhartz compares the articulation of the father-son relationship in *John* to Aristotelian understandings of human reproduction, and she suggests that the language of fathers and sons in *John* depends on a notion of maleness as perfect. She writes, “God’s ability to transform the Word, his λόγος, into flesh is predicated on an understanding of God as male and as in some way being capable of generation through divine seed just as human males generate through human seed.” The relationship of father and son depends on an idea of perfected reproduction from male to male. In *1ApocJas*, the Johannine vocabulary allows the text to emphasize the maleness of God. Adele Reinhartz, “‘And the Word Was Begotten’: Divine Epigenesis in the Gospel of John,” *Semeia* 85 (1999), 99. On sexual difference and the father/son relationship in *John*, see also Allison Jasper, *The Shining Garment of the Text: Gendered Readings of John’s Prologue* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998); Mary Rose D’Angelo, “Imitating Deity in the Gospel of John: Theological Language and ‘Father’ in ‘Prayers of Jesus,’” *Semeia* 85 (1999), 59–82; Colleen Conway, “‘Behold the Man!’ Masculine Christology and the Fourth Gospel,” in *New Testament Masculinities* (eds. Janice D. Anderson and Stephen Moore; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 163–180.

They are not entirely other to me, but Achamoth, that is, the female, and she created these ones for herself. And she brought down the race which is from the beginning. Thus, they are [not] other to [me], but they are mine. They are [mine] according to [the fact that the one (f.) who is] lord over them is from the One Who Is from the beginning. But they became [other] because the One Who Is from the beginning did not join with her when she created them.

Ζἡὺς ἡμοῖ ἀν ἐροῖ ἐπιτηρῶ ἡε: ἀλλὰ δ᾽ ἄλ᾽ ἄλ᾽ ἐ[τε] ταεῖ τε τεσῶμε: ἀγὼ
 ἀσταμιο ἡναῖ ἡας: ἀσεῖνε δε ἐρῆϊ ἡπῖγενος ἐτωοοῖ χῆ ἡωορ[ῖ] ἀρα δε
 Ζἡὺς ἡμοῖ ἐροῖ ἀν ἡ]ε [α]λλὰ νετενογῖ ἡε ἡ[ε]τενο]γῖ [ἡε]ἡ νε κατὰ [θ]ε
 [ε]τε τετο] ἡ᾽ ἐροογ τα πετωαα[τ τε] χῆ ἡωαρῖ: ἡταγῖ ἡῖ[μο] ἀε ξε
 ἡπετετωααῖ χῆ ἡωορῖ κοινωῖ ἡῖμας ἡτερφεσταμιοο[γ] (21.2–15)

At this point in the text, Achamoth is a new character, and so she is glossed as “the female,” which I take to be a technical term. The unmodified definite noun τεσῶμε, meaning “the female,” only appears in the text in descriptions of Achamoth. It has the same meaning as “femaleness,” the abstract noun τῆντεσῶμε, which was seen in the introductory passage (10.19–27). While the terminology used in the two passages is somewhat different, the character Achamoth appears to be equivalent to femaleness, the cosmic power discussed on the text’s first page. It may be that the text uses the abstract noun “femaleness” to abstract a principle from the definite mythological character Achamoth.³ In any case, the parallels between the two figures are overwhelming. Just as femaleness “created powers and gods for herself” (10.22–23), likewise Achamoth “created these ones for herself.” Just as femaleness’ creation was separate from the One Who Is, here Achamoth did not unite with the pre-existent One before her act of creation. Just as femaleness is secondary to the One Who Is, Achamoth “is from the One Who Is from the beginning.”

These revelations establish that Achamoth plays a decisive role in the narrative of salvation. Before offering this revelation, Jesus introduced his speech by saying, “Look, now I will reveal to you your salvation” (εἰςζητε ἡνογ ἡναδωαπ ἡακ ἐβολ ἡπερκωτε, 19.22–24).

³ Yoo, “Die erste Apokalypse des Jakobus,” 124.

And indeed, the revelation will save James. We see in the narrative frame of the embedded dialogue that James will give these answers to his interrogators, and his words will overpower them so that he can escape. He will be saved by speaking these words. It is not clear at first why this theological discourse should have such power, but the next section adds clarification. Jesus reveals that James will escape the “toll collectors” if he says in these words who he is and to whom he has come. But he will be detained and questioned again, now by “the three, these ones who take the soul” (ⲧⲱⲉⲣⲧⲉ ⲛⲁⲓ ⲉⲧⲥⲓ ⲛⲧⲉⲧⲃⲭⲏ, 21.21–22).⁴ Again, Jesus provides the words that James will say. “I am a vessel more honored than Achamoth, the female, who created you” (ⲁⲛⲕ ⲟⲩⲥⲕⲉⲩⲟⲥ ⲉⲓⲧⲁⲓⲛⲩ ⲡⲁⲣⲁ ⲁⲭⲁⲙⲱⲑ ⲧⲉⲥⲓⲛⲉ ⲛⲧⲁⲥⲧⲁⲙⲓⲟ ⲛⲙⲱⲧⲏ, 21.25–27). Both the toll collectors and the three who take the soul count among the rulers created by Achamoth. James, who can draw his lineage back to the One Who Is, is more powerful and more honored than the rulers that are merely creations of Achamoth. The rulers who claim to have the power to detain and to take away souls in fact were created by Achamoth, and as such they have no power over a person who knows that his or her lineage runs back to the One Who Is.

This salvation appears as re-absorption into a primal unity which is either male or ungendered. Both perspectives on unity are offered in Jesus’ revelation. At one point, Jesus tells James that when “you cast off the blindness that is in your mind” (ⲉⲓⲙⲏⲧⲓ ⲛⲕⲛⲟⲩⲭⲉ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛⲧⲙⲏⲧⲃⲗⲁ ⲉⲧⲓⲛ ⲡⲉⲕⲓⲛⲧ, 13.20–21),⁵ then, “you will attain to the One Who Is and you will no longer be James, but you will be in all ways in the One Who Is” (ⲕⲛⲁⲡⲱⲓ ⲱⲗ ⲡⲉⲧⲱⲟⲟⲡ ⲁⲩⲱ

⁴ The NHC version emphasizes further that these three are endowed with the power to arrest and detain. “[These] three captors [who] take souls” (ⲓⲛⲓⲱⲟⲙⲉⲧ ⲛⲣⲉⲓⲁⲙⲁⲓⲧⲉ ⲓⲛⲓ ⲉⲧⲥⲓ ⲛⲏⲛⲧⲃⲭⲏⲧⲃⲭⲏ; V 34.22–23).

⁵ The NHC version has a similar sense, as Jesus tells James he cannot fully understand “unless you cast off blind thought from yourself” (ⲱⲁⲛⲧⲉⲕⲏⲛⲟⲩⲭⲉ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛⲏⲟⲕ ⲛⲧⲁⲓⲁⲛⲟⲓⲁ ⲛⲃⲉⲗⲗⲏ; V 27.3–4). The use of the Greco-Coptic ⲧⲁⲓⲁⲛⲟⲓⲁ where the TC describes blindness ⲉⲧⲓⲛ ⲡⲉⲕⲓⲛⲧ helps confirm my choice to translate ⲓⲛⲧ as mind. This is a cognitive problem that James must transcend.

ΟΥΚΕΤΙ ΚΗΛΩΠΕ ΝΙΔΑΚΚΩΒΟΣ ΑΛΛΑ ΠΕΤΖΗ ΠΕΤΩΟΠ ΚΑΤΑ ΖΩΒ ΝΗΜ, 13.23–14.2).⁶ This explanation of salvation emphasizes the transformation of the person into some new form in the divine realms. James no longer exists because he has been subsumed into the realms of the One Who Is, beyond all qualities and predications.

This vision of James becoming part of a transcendent whole with the One Who Is stands in contrast to James' statement of identity within the embedded dialogue. There he is to say that he is "the son, from the father." This son "is in the One Who Is from the beginning." In this passage, James' salvation again coincides with James' personal identity being dissolved and replaced by a new existence in the divine realms. However, here the primal maleness of both God and the perfected soul are emphasized. James has become the son, and he is the son who is in all ways within the father. The perfected state of the human, like the nature of God, can be described either as ungendered or perfectly male.

I have thus far found in *IApocJas* a reasonably coherent story of male dominance, or at least of the denigration of the female. The perfect God may be male ("the Father") or ungendered ("the One Who Is"), but in any case this divinity exists at a higher level of reality than femaleness or Achamoth. Salvation may be achieved by becoming "a son" or one who is "entirely in the One Who Is," but regardless it requires defeating the agents of femaleness in order to return to the divine realms. However, this is not ultimately the story told by the *First Apocalypse of James*. Instead, Jesus' continued revelations build a richer and more complex picture both of the divine realms and of human salvation.

⁶ The NHC version articulates James' transformation in even more radical terms. "Then you will attain to the One Who Is, and so you will no longer be James, but you are the One Who Is" (ΤΟΤΕ ΕΚΗΛΑΤΑΝΤΑ ΕΖΡΑΪ ΕΠΕΤΩΟΠ ΑΥΩ ΚΗΛΩΠΕ ΔΗ ΔΕ ΕΝΤΡ' ΙΔΑΚΚΩΒΟΣ ΔΗ ΑΛΛΑ ΝΤΟΚ ΠΕ ΠΗ ΕΤΩΟΠ; V 27.6–10). I think this merely expresses in a logical fashion the same idea from the Tchacos Codex. If James will lose his personal identity, then when he is "in the One Who Is," he cannot be himself separate from the One Who Is. James, becoming entirely "in the One Who Is," becomes indeed transformed into the perfection of the highest God.

Within the long revelation speech, the divine realms come to include, internal to their perfection, a certain gendered differentiation. While the character of Achamoth or “femaleness” still bears responsibility for the divergence of humanity from the divine realms, additional female characters come to populate the divine realms. It has already been established that Jesus exists in the divine realms, as the “second” from the One Who Is. He is not alone. After providing James the words he can say to escape his captors, Jesus explains why these words are effective. He tells James to explain to the rulers where they come from, and by what power in the heavens they will be defeated.

I am a vessel more honored than Achamoth, the female, who created you. And if your mother is ignorant of her own root, then when will you become sober? But I have summoned undefiled Sophia, who is in the [Father], the mother of Achamoth, but her partner was [not] right [with the] female. Without a male, [she] alone created you, and she was ignorant of her mother—it is she alone who is ignorant of her mother—and she believed that she was alone, but I invoked her mother.

ΑΝΚ ΟΥΣΚΕΥΟΣ ΕΨΤΑΪΝΥ ΠΑΡΑ ἈΧἈΜΩΘ ΤΕC2ΙΜΕ ΝΤΑC ΤΑΜΙΟ ΜΗΩΤἸ ΔΥΩ
ΕΨΧΕ ΤΕΤἸΜΑΟΥ ΔἸ ΝΑΤCΑΟΥΝ ΕΤΕCΝΟΥΝΕ ΜΙΝ ΜΟC 2ΙΕ ΝΤΩΤἸ
ΕΤΗΔῚΗΗΦΕ 2Ἰ ΑΩ [ΠΟ]ΥΔΕΙΩ ΑΛΛΑ ΑΠΑΡΑΚΑΛΕΙ ΝΤCΟΦΙΑ ΝΑΤΧΩ2Ἰ ΤΑἸ
ΕΤΩΟΠ 2Ἰ ΠΙ[ΩΤ] ΤΗΑΟΥ ΝἈΧἈΜΩΘ ΑΛΛΑ [ΜΠΕ]ΠΕCΣΥΖΥΓΟC CΑΟΥΤἸ [ΜἸ
ΤΕC]2ΙΜΕ ΧΩΡΙC 2ΑΟΥ[Τ ΑC]ΤΑΜΙΟ ΜΗΩΤἸ ΟΥΑΔCΤ [ΑC]ΨΩΠΕ ΕCΑἸ
ΝΑΤCΟΟΥΝΕ Ε[ΤΕ]CΗΑΟΥ ΝΤΟC ΟΥΑ[Α]ΤC ΕΤΩΟΠ ΕCΟ ΝΑΤCΟΟΥΝΕ
ΕΤΕCΜΕΟΥ ΔΥΩ ΝΕCΜΕΟΥΕ ΧΕ ΗΤΟC ΟΥΑΔΤC ΠΕ ΑΝΟΡ ΔΕ ΔΕἸΡ ΕΠΙΚΑΛΕΙ
ΝΤΕCΗΑΟΥ (21.25–22.16)

The multiple invocations here assert the superiority of James to the forces who have detained him. Jesus tells James that if he learns these words and recites them to his interrogators, they will let him pass, cursing their own weakness. The weakness of the creatures of Achamoth appears with greater specificity in this passage. Not only are they unworthy of concern due to the circumstances of their creation, but they are also characterized by ignorance. More importantly, James is told to invoke Sophia, a new character in the divine realms. Achamoth the female, Jesus, and the pre-existent One Who Is are not the only figures who populate these realms.

Achamoth has a mother, the “undefiled Sophia.” This description significantly complicates the narrative and the underlying articulation of sexual difference.

Jesus instructs James to invoke Sophia. Upon that invocation, Jesus explains, the detainers will be troubled and thrown into uncertainty. Achamoth seemed to share the characteristics of femaleness, a secondary, inessential being who created the evil world rulers. Sophia does not. She is undefiled. She belongs so fully to the divine realms that her name may be invoked in defense against the world rulers. Just as James must attain to knowledge of the true God in order to be saved, it is Achamoth’s ignorance about Sophia which denotes her weakness and her secondary position. James, then, must attain knowledge of the female figures in the divine realms in order to be saved. Strikingly, the text does not suggest that Sophia lacks qualities of femaleness and femininity. Rather, she is repeatedly called “the mother” as an honorific. Her status as mother signifies her power, and Achamoth’s ignorance of her mother signifies her weakness. This passage suggests an articulation of sexual difference in which femaleness does not represent secondariness or weakness. In the remainder of this chapter, I will explore why Sophia has been introduced here and what her introduction means for the text’s theology and its articulation of sexual difference. This explanation will require the contextualization of *IApocJas* within ancient discourses of sexual difference and theology.

Sexual Difference in Theology

Jesus’ revelation imagines the divine realms through the language of sexual difference. *IApocJas* stands within ancient discourses of sexual difference when the text speaks of the divine in terms of maleness and femaleness. Stephen Moore’s reading of Paul’s *Letter to the Romans* offers one useful comparison, because he locates *Romans* within a precisely sketched

Greco-Roman system of sexual difference. I find that *1ApocJas*' articulation of sexual difference draws on a world of thought and practice broadly similar to that in which Moore locates *Romans*. First, Moore lays out a general Greco-Roman "sex/gender system," which he compares to a pyramid with adult male citizens at the top, above variously arrayed "unmen" who lack the full complement of male traits. Moore offers as examples of unmen, "females, boys, slaves (of either sex), sexually passive or 'effeminate' males, eunuchs, 'barbarians,' and so on."⁷ This hierarchy was understood by analogy to penetrative sexual acts. The person who held a higher position on the pyramid would be the penetrative partner, the lower-positioned person the receptive. The ideal man, then, would be impenetrable, always dominant in the eyes of this system.⁸ God is the perfect representative of controlled righteousness, and thus the ideal form of the dominant male at the top of the pyramid.

The Impenetrable Penetrator (that condition being the quintessence of Roman manhood, as we have seen—it is not by accident that we speak of 'the impenetrability of God') remains fully in charge, and his superiority and their inferiority are being properly displayed on behalf of all males everywhere—which, for Paul and the hegemonic hypermasculinity for which he is here the mouthpiece, is all that matters ultimately.⁹

⁷ Moore, *God's Beauty Parlor*, 136.

⁸ On the interconnection of sexual and social hierarchies, see also Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*; K. J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989); David Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and Other Essays on Greek Love*. New York: Routledge, 1990); Laqueur, *Making Sex* Elizabeth Castelli, "I Will Make Mary Male: Pieties of the Body and Gender Transformation in Late Antiquity," in *Body Guards: The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity*, eds. Julia Epstein and Kristina Straub (New York: Routledge, 1991), 29–49; Giulia Sissa, "The Sexual Philosophies of Plato and Aristotle," in *From Ancient Goddesses to Christian Saints* (vol. 1 of *A History of Women in the West*; ed. P.S. Pantel; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), 46–81; Maud W. Gleason, *Making Men: Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995); Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); Bernadette Brooten, *Love Between Women: Early Christian Responses to Female Homoeroticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Matthew Kuefler, *The Manly Eunuch: Masculinity, Gender Ambiguity, and Christian Ideology in Late Antiquity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Jennifer Wright Knust, *Abandoned to Lust: Sexual Slander and Ancient Christianity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006). For partly dissenting views, see Simon Goldhill, *Foucault's Virginity: Ancient Erotic Fiction and the History of Sexuality* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Kathy L. Gaca, *The Making of Fornication: Eros, Ethics, and Political Reform in Greek Philosophy and Early Christianity* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2003).

⁹ Moore, *God's Beauty Parlor*, 169.

Paul draws on notions of human perfection to explicate the nature of the divine. Because masculinity marks perfection, God's perfection appears in his perfect maleness. Through comparison to ancient Mediterranean discourses and practices of sexual difference, Moore locates Paul's theology also within this hegemonic ideology of "hypermasculinity."

The theology of *IApocJas* also makes sense within the system of sex and gender sketched by Moore. The centrality of sexual difference in the text's theology becomes clear in the description of the One Who Is as "the Father" and his followers as his "sons." The perfection of the One Who Is would necessarily mark God as male within Moore's model, and this then becomes explicit in the discussion of the "Father Who Is." Further, in *IApocJas* James must triumph over Achamoth and her powers in order to progress to unity with the One Who Is and the divine realms. The female here appears as that which is lacking, that which is other than the perfection of the divine. The articulation of sexual difference in *IApocJas* draws from dominant discourses and practices of sexual difference in the ancient Mediterranean. Like Paul, *IApocJas* understands the perfection of the divine in terms of the perfection of the ideal male.

Of course, as I have argued, the imagination of divine perfection does not map to such a simple hierarchy. First, *IApocJas* imagines God at times as non-gendered because the One Who Is must be beyond description. Second, the divine realms come to be described according to a certain gendered plurality. While "femaleness" appears as the agent of harmful differentiation, "the undefiled Sophia" is invoked as a powerful actor within the divine realms. These aspects of *IApocJas* locate it within ancient Christian Valentinian discourse. A strictly monistic view of God, which likewise characterizes Valentinian theology, underlies the text's occasional suggestions that the One Who Is exists beyond gender.¹⁰ The identification of distinct and

¹⁰ On monism and Valentinian theology, see Schoedel, "Gnostic Monism and the *Gospel of Truth*," in Layton, *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, vol. 1, 379–390.

differently valenced female divine actors reflects the complex Valentinian understanding of divine plurality. The key issue for comparison is the gendering of theology and protology. While the corpus of texts and excerpts labeled “Valentinian” is wide-ranging, scholars have noted a shared theological myth with a tendency to articulate the difference between the one and the many in gendered terms. Einar Thomassen summarizes the issue clearly.

The major concern of the Valentinian protologies is, as we have seen, to explain how plurality comes into being from oneness. The initial oneness of the Father becomes two with Father-and-Son, and this twoness in turn generates the plurality of the Pleroma of the aeons. The tension between unity and diversity inherent in the Pleroma as it unfolds eventually produces a rupture, represented by the myth of Sophia. Sophia personifies the negative and uncontrolled aspect of the plurality that was first introduced when the Father decided to become more than himself alone.¹¹

Thomassen describes here the multivalent articulation of divine plurality within ancient Valentinian thought. The divine realms are characterized by a productive tension between plurality and oneness, and this plurality often takes the form of male-female pairs. Plurality bears within itself the danger of disunity, and that disunity comes to be attributed to a female figure, usually Sophia or Wisdom. Sophia’s rupture produces a gap between the divine realms and the world of humanity—typically Sophia splits off from the divine realms by producing on her own, and this creation leads to the creation of the world.¹² Sexual difference, then, can appear in two

¹¹ Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed*, 269. Now, in *1ApocJas*, the “rupture represented by the myth of Sophia” instead was the work of Achamoth. The “undefiled Sophia” remains an honored member of the divine realms. I will discuss this splitting of the role of Sophia below.

¹² Raimund Köbert, “Achamoth,” *Biblica* 45 (1964), 254–255; G. Christopher Stead, “The Valentinian Myth of Sophia,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 20 (1969), 75–104; George MacRae, “The Jewish Background of the Gnostic Sophia Myth,” *Novum Testamentum* 12 (1970), 86–101; Deirdre Good, *Reconstructing the Tradition of Sophia in Gnostic Literature* (SBLMS 32; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987); Scholten, *Martyrium und Sophiamythos*; Guy Stroumsa, *Another Seed: Studies in Gnostic Mythology* (NHS 24; Leiden: Brill, 1988); King, *The Secret Revelation of John*, 225–234; Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed*, 248–262; Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism*, 95–118. A variety of early Christian thinkers, not just Valentinians, derived a myth of divine Wisdom acting in creation from a reading of Proverbs and other Jewish sapiential literature. George MacRae demonstrated this most convincingly through a reading of Sethian texts, and G. Christopher Stead made a similar determination in a reading of Valentinian materials. This has come to be called in scholarly literature the “Sophia myth” although there is clearly not one myth of Sophia but many. Karen King has argued, at least for the *Apocryphon of John*, that an intertextual engagement with *Genesis*, Wisdom literature, and Platonic philosophy lies behind the depiction of Sophia. In

distinct forms. In one form, sexual difference can represent an aspect of the stable, perfect divine plurality. In another form, sexual difference can represent the dangers of plurality and the break between the divine realms and the world of humanity. As a consequence of this second form, sexual difference can appear as the aspect of the human which must be triumphed over in a return to perfection.

As I have argued, *IApocJas* imagines salvation as a return to primordial unity with the One Who Is. Salvation enacts a reversal of the protological myth. The human returns through the stages of devolution from primal unity until he or she has reached the divine realms. This story of salvation has multiple implications for the articulation of sexual difference. If salvation means reversing the devolution of the world from the divine realms, and if femaleness was responsible for that devolution, then salvation means surpassing that which is female. However, the “femaleness” responsible for the devolution of the world is not the only female figure in the divine realms. Achamoth, whom I will argue represents a particular kind of lower Sophia figure, is associated with the negative aspect of plurality. The more positive aspect of plurality also incorporates sexual difference. Divine female actors also populate the divine realms, and they appear to be fully within the One Who Is despite their gendered characteristics.

This multivalent articulation of gender and plurality has its roots in Valentinian theology. In a number of Valentinian texts, the role of Sophia described by Thomassen is split between two figures, a higher and a lower Sophia. The higher Sophia remains safely ensconced in the positive plurality of the divine realms, while only the lower Sophia bears responsibility for rupture. This

IApocJas, the components of a certain Sophia story seem to be in place in the background, as “settled science,” and they are brought forward as needed. For a discussion of discourses and practices of ancient goddess devotion as intertexts for Sophia in some early Christian texts, see PHEME PERKINS, “Sophia as Goddess in the Nag Hammadi Codices,” in *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism* (ed. Karen King; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 96–112.

lower Sophia often bears the name Achamoth.¹³ The name itself demonstrates that this is a Sophia figure, as it was derived from the plural of Hebrew name of Wisdom, *hokmōt*.¹⁴ *IApocJas* even mentions this linguistic derivation in a later passage where Jesus is summing up for James the content of his revelation. “I have revealed to you,” Jesus says, “Achamoth, the female, which is translated, ‘Sophia’” (ΛΕΙΩΑΠ ΝΑΚ ΕΒΟΛ ΧΕ ... Ἀχάμηθεν τῆς ζῆμης τῆς ἐμῆς ζεῖμηνεν ἡμᾶς ΧΕ σοφία; 22.24–23.4).¹⁵ The higher Sophia is “undefiled” and powerful, while the lower Achamoth is guilty of creating on her own and is characterized by ignorance. To better elucidate how this double Sophia system functions in *IApocJas*, I find it useful to consider the multiple depictions of Sophia/Wisdom in a different Valentinian source, the *Excerpts from Theodotus*.

The *Excerpts from Theodotus* and Valentinian Theology

Transmitted by Clement of Alexandria, the *Excerpts from Theodotus* lays out a narrative of creation, differentiation, and salvation in which sexual difference plays a similarly central role.¹⁶ Clement attributes these writings to a Theodotus who lived during the late second century CE and was a follower of Valentinus. This attribution cannot be certain, but scholars generally accept that these excerpts were collected by Clement or by a member of his school, and so the

¹³ See *Excerpts from Theodotus* 43–45, *Gospel of Philip* I 60.10–15, and the Valentinian system in Irenaeus’ *Against the Heresies* 1.1–7. In *GosPhil* and *AH*, the name “Achamoth” or “Echamoth” appears for this lower Sophia.

¹⁴ Köbert, “Achamoth,” 254–255; Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism*, 100–101.

¹⁵ The NHC V version lacks Jesus’ statement in which he explains that he is summing up his revelation, but the summary of Achamoth is nearly identical, missing only the gloss of Achamoth as “the female.” (Ἀχάμηθεν τῆς [τοῦ] ζεῖμηνεν ἡμ[οις] ΧΕ σοφία, NHC V 36.4–5).

¹⁶ For the Greek text, see François Sagnard, ed. and trans., *Clément d’Alexandrie: Extraits de Théodote* (SC 23; Paris: Cerf), 1970. For translation, see Robert P. Casey, trans., *The Excerpta ex Theodoto of Clement of Alexandria* (ed. Kirsopp Lake; London: Christopher’s, 1934).

collection can be reasonably dated to the late second or early third century CE.¹⁷ The primary concern of these excerpts is human salvation, but they contain enough theological discussion to locate *Excerpts* within the discourse of Valentinian theology.

The *Excerpts* describe the processes of human creation and salvation in relation to these differently valenced accounts of unity and plurality. The divine realms are defined by their unity, according to a positive accounting of plurality. “Therefore though there is unity in the Pleroma, each of the Aeons has its own complement, the syzygia.”¹⁸ These heavenly “marriages” between male and female elements constitute a single unity through their harmony.¹⁹ This unity devolves when “the Mother” produces separately an “inferior” being, the “ruler.” She creates because of her desire, and as such her creation “was made less, as if he was created from the passion of desire.”²⁰ Humanity’s need for salvation derives from this desirous and inferior creation.

The text discusses the situation of humanity arising from this creation in terms of maleness and femaleness. When we are saved, Theodotus explains, we are “restored to unity

¹⁷ Christoph Marksches, “Valentinian Gnosticism: Toward the Anatomy of a School,” in McGuire and Turner, *The Nag Hammadi Library after Fifty Years*, 434–435. For further discussion of the *Excerpts*, see Elaine Pagels, “Conflicting Versions of Valentinian Eschatology: Irenaeus’ Treatise vs. The *Excerpts From Theodotus*,” *Harvard Theological Review* 67 (1974) 35–53; J.F. McCue, “Conflicting Versions of Valentinianism? Irenaeus and the *Excerpta ex Theodoto*,” in Layton, *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, vol. 1, 404–416; Jorunn Jacobsen Buckley, *Female Fault and Fulfilment in Gnosticism* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 61–83; Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed*, 28–39, 377–383; Benjamin Dunning, *Specters of Paul: Sexual Difference in Early Christian Thought* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 43–50.

¹⁸ *Excerpts* 22 (Casey).

¹⁹ As Dale Martin has argued, such androgynous pairings are “actually the subsuming of the weaker female into the stronger male ... [it] embodies the unequal hierarchy of male over female; it does not dispense with it or overcome it.” Martin, *Sex and the Single Savior*, 84. On the notion of the “partners” in Valentinian texts, and the ways in which this notion served to reinforce a masculinist ideology, see Peter Brown, *Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 103–121; Dennis Ronald MacDonald, “Corinthian Veils and Gnostic Androgynes,” in King, *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism*, 276–292; Dunning, *Specters of Paul*, 31–50.

²⁰ *Excerpts* 33 (Casey).

with the males.”²¹ The gendered language refers to classes of people at different states of attainment, with female being the lower and male the higher. The male and female classes further correspond to the elements of spirit and soul, *pneuma* and *psuche*. As Jorunn Jacobsen Buckley puts it, “the element *pneuma*, equated... with the male, is superior to the *psuche* in such a way that the lower, female *psuche* element needs to acquire the nature of the male *pneuma* in order to be eligible for salvation.”²² The *Excerpts* maps progress toward salvation according to sexual difference. This surpassing of femaleness to acquire maleness would seem to fit with the story of the lesser creation by the “Mother.” However, when Theodotus considers the creation and salvation of humanity, it is not the “Mother” who appears as the creator, but Wisdom (or Sophia). This second Sophia figure creates on her own, but she creates both aspects of humanity, male and female, pneumatic and psychic.

The finest emanation of Wisdom is spoken of in "He created them in the image of God, male and female created he them." Now the males from this emanation are the "election," but the females are the "calling" and they call the male beings angelic, and the females themselves, the separate seed. So also, in the case of Adam, the male remained in him but all the female seed was taken from him and became Eve, from whom the females are derived, as the males are from him. Therefore the males are drawn together with the Logos, but the females, becoming men, are united to the angels and pass into the Pleroma. Therefore the woman is said to be changed into a man, and the church here on earth into angels.²³

²¹ *Ibid.* 33.

²² Buckley, *Female Fault and Fulfilment in Gnosticism*, 61–62. See also McCue, “Conflicting Versions,” 409. Some earlier commentators understood the classes of humanity here to be fixed, with people automatically saved due to their possession of a certain nature. This reading cannot stand on face value, as *Excerpts* speaks clearly of the female turning into the male, and is written to an audience that understands themselves as “female” and “psychic” in search of perfection and salvation.

²³ *Excerpts* 21 (Casey). I have made one small change to Casey’s translation here, as he translated τὸ διαφέρον πνεῦμα as “the superior seed,” while I have taken it as “the separate seed.” I follow Buckley and Pagels in this translation. Casey presumed that because the *Excerpts* referred to the Valentinian community as διαφέρον, this term must imply a sort of superiority. However, the text is clear that it speaks from the position of the “females” or the “calling,” which is not the superior position. Buckley, *Female Fault and Fulfilment in Gnosticism*, 63–64; Pagels, “Conflicting Versions,” 42.

This sketch of salvation makes use of the terms male and female in the expected ways. Males as the “election” have achieved a higher state of being than females, and females must become male in order to reach the Pleroma. Buckley explains, “everything has come full circle, the origin has been restored, the saved church has become angelic. For all of these the solution implies that femaleness must be overcome in order for maleness to be fully restored, to become itself.”²⁴ However, while Buckley’s summary covers well the topic of human salvation and sexual difference, this solution does not appear to apply to Wisdom herself. She creates on her own both the election and the calling, both the male and the female. This “finest emanation” derives from Wisdom without any partner. Theodotus appears to distinguish between the Mother, whose creation arose from desire and was immediately made less, and Wisdom, whose “finest emanation” includes both the election and the calling.

In the *Excerpts*, these two distinguishable Sophia figures both play a role in creation, but the deeply flawed, passionate creation is attributed to the Mother, not to Wisdom. Within the plurality of the divine realms, the text leaves open the possibility of honored female figures. The distinction between the Sophia figures according to the passions is important for the reading of Paul that follows later in the text. This section builds its narrative of the cosmos and human salvation from the interpretation of Paul—*Romans* 7.5–6 in particular.²⁵ *Romans* 7.5 reads, “When we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death.”²⁶ Theodotus explains, “‘When we were living in the flesh,’ the

²⁴ Buckley, *Female Fault and Fulfilment in Gnosticism*, 83.

²⁵ Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed*, 134.

²⁶ Scholars generally take this passage as a speech in character, to solve the problem of various statements that do not make much sense as personal statements of Paul’s own life. In particular, *Romans* 7.9, which begins, “I was once alive apart from the law.” For different interpretations, see Daniel Boyarin, who argues this is a speech as Adam, and Stanley Stowers, who takes it as a Gentile who attempts to live by the Jewish law. Theodotus solves the problems of this passage by selecting out these lines and reading them for their theological teaching, rather than

apostle says, speaking as if he were already outside the body. By ‘flesh’ he refers, he says, to that weakness which is the emission of the female above.”²⁷ This creation of weakness refers to the Mother, and this weakness matches Paul’s argument in *Romans* because for both it is the passions which represent and demonstrate human lack. Salvation occurs when we are transformed from “children of the female” to “children of the male.”

In a recent, groundbreaking study of sexual difference in early Christianity, Benjamin Dunning highlights the importance of the interpretation of Paul. In particular, Dunning argues that certain moments of incoherence in Paul’s articulation of anthropology, theology and sexual difference repeat themselves in the writings of Paul’s interpreters. Paul understood the fundamental axis of salvation history to run from Adam to Christ and that typology leaves no obvious place to fit sexual difference.

Here a real dilemma emerged for early Christians as they sought to theologize the sexed body in a conceptual field already overdetermined by the Pauline text: sexual difference simply does not fit in any obvious or uncomplicated way into a theology of creation and resurrection grounded in an Adam-Christ typology. And this dilemma, I will argue, continued to exercise an indirect influence that long outlived Paul, haunting Christian discourse on the question of sexual difference into the second and third centuries and beyond.²⁸

As readers of Paul attempt to articulate full and coherent visions of sexual difference, the moments of incoherence in Paul’s thought re-emerge in various forms and prevent any ultimate or complete coherence. Because the fundamental vision of human salvation imagined by Paul left no clear space open for sexual difference, theologians who inherited Paul’s vision worked themselves into new and stranger moments of incoherence in pursuit of a complete narrative of

integrating them into the rest of *Romans* 7. Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1994), 162–167; Stanley Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles* (New Haven, Ct.: Yale University Press, 1994), 259–284.

²⁷ *Excerpts* 67 (Casey).

²⁸ Dunning, *Specters of Paul*, 12–13.

sexual difference within human salvation. Dunning writes, “the specter [of Paul] persists, visible in the disavowed and unacknowledged fault lines and failures that each position necessarily generates.”²⁹ The specter of Paul refers to the fundamental incoherence of Paul’s own articulation of sexual difference with regard to human salvation, and this specter is reproduced in the thought of writers who take up Paul’s categories and his anthropology. The gaps and contradictions in Paul’s thought undo any attempts at wholeness or completeness in the theologies of his readers.

The structure of Dunning’s argument can perhaps best be understood by briefly summarizing his reading of Irenaeus.³⁰ For Irenaeus, human salvation occurs through Christ’s “recapitulation” of human history, by which all things are redeemed and a positive future swallows up a negative past. This vision inherits from Paul the centrality of the Adam-Christ framework. If recapitulation requires “a consummation of all things in which every element in the end is linked to its corresponding component at the beginning,” then it depends on forging these links between Adam and Christ.³¹ At the same time, Irenaeus did not imagine that sexual difference would be entirely eliminated in the eschaton, but rather that the Edenic state of differentiated but virginal sexual difference would be recapitulated through Christ. This creates an obvious problem because now Eve has been inserted into the schema of human salvation as the representative of differentiated female bodies in the story of the origin. Likewise, Irenaeus turns to discuss the virgin Mary as Eve’s eschatological counterpart. Dunning argues that Irenaeus uses his readings of Mary and Eve to establish the connection between Adam and

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 24.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 97–123.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 98–99. On recapitulation in Irenaeus, see Eric Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 97–140.

Christ, but in this attempt to shore up the Adam-Christ relationship, Irenaeus introduces a destabilizing element of sexual difference which cannot fit into his Pauline framework.

The key to Irenaeus' reading lies in associating the "virgin earth" from which Adam was created with the "virgin birth" from Mary by which Christ was created. Because the earth from which Adam was created in *Genesis* 2.7 was described as untilled in 2.5, Irenaeus argues that it was unpenetrated and thus virginal.³² This secures for Irenaeus the analogy between Mary's virginal body and the earth from Adam was formed, thus linking Christ to Adam by their creations. The flesh Christ received from Mary is derived from the same virgin earth that produced Adam. However, Dunning argues, "the analogy is preserved at a price: the introduction of the sexually unpenetrated female body as an image/concept on which the logic of recapitulation hangs."³³ Pure virginity, which Irenaeus imagined as the state of humankind in the eschaton, now appears feminized and associated with a logic of penetration and sexual desire. The flesh of Christ, which, according to Irenaeus' theory of recapitulation, assures the salvation of embodied humanity, "is itself already implicated in the conceptual specifics of the female body, insofar as its origin in virgin soil depends on the logic of penetration."³⁴ Irenaeus' vision of human salvation, then, can only run from Adam to Christ by means of an imagination of specifically female bodily difference, connected to procreation and desire. The pure virginity of perfected humanity, in Irenaeus, can only come to be through an association with penetration and procreation which is then in turn disavowed. In Dunning's reading, this is where the specter of Paul can be seen. Irenaeus seeks a coherent and self-sufficient vision of human salvation and

³² Dunning, *Specters of Paul*, 107–114. He focuses here on Irenaeus, *Epideixis* 32. "Therefore out of this earth, while it was still virgin, 'God took dirt from the earth and formed a man,' the beginning of humanity."

³³ Dunning, *Specters of Paul*, 114.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 122.

sexual difference. Because of his inheritance of the Adam-Christ framework from Paul, Irenaeus bases his story of human salvation on the virginal creations of these two figures, but in doing so he introduces female bodily difference and the logic of penetration into the core of his theology. They remain there, disavowed but necessary, in Dunning's words a "remainder" of Irenaeus' theology which prevents its ultimate coherence.³⁵

This compelling argument challenges the notion that early Christian engagements with sexual difference inscribe a strict and relentless gendered hierarchy of male over female, what Daniel Boyarin calls a "reinstatement of masculinism."³⁶ Rather, Dunning explains that these writings are only "masquerading as solid and self-sufficient," and they are rendered ultimately incoherent by the inheritance from Paul of a schema of human salvation which leaves no evident space for human sexual difference.³⁷ There is no uniformity to ancient Christian articulations of sexual difference. Instead they are multiple, complex and plagued by incoherence. I draw on Dunning's revision of the study of ancient imaginations of sexual difference for this focus on complexity, multiplicity and lack of coherence. I will argue, however, that the specific structure of his reading does not apply perfectly to the *Excerpts from Theodotus* and will not be as fruitful when applied to the *First Apocalypse of James*.

Dunning considers Theodotus as one of these readers of Paul, but he suggests that the *Excerpts* are comparatively free of Paul's haunting. He locates the text's understanding of salvation under the rubric of Paul's Adam-Christ typology. By interpreting the passions in *Romans 7* as the mark of femaleness, Theodotus creates a space for sexual difference which does

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 122.

³⁶ Boyarin, "Gender," in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies* (ed. Mark C. Taylor; Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998), 126. Cited in Dunning, *Specters of Paul*, 7.

³⁷ Dunning, *Specters of Paul*, 24.

not, at first glance, undermine the Adam-Christ story. “The female is *nothing but* a figure of formlessness and division—a cosmological aberration having no legitimate standing of its own. As such, it can be situated between the earthly Adam and the heavenly Christ as a site of problematic (but temporary) rupture.”³⁸ The *Excerpts* seems to solve the problem in Paul by casting sexual difference as entirely inessential, a mere “aberration” which is transcended in the return to undifferentiated maleness. The fall of Adam partakes in femaleness and produces sexual difference, and humanity can attain re-admittance to the divine realms through Christ when femaleness is sloughed off. The inessential female in the theology of the *Excerpts* fits into Paul’s Adam-Christ typology because she does not challenge the position of either Adam or Christ.

Dunning does not argue that the *Excerpts* thus solves the intractable problem inherited from Paul. Rather, he suggests that the specter of Paul still lurks under the surface of the text, but the *Excerpts* never engages deeply enough with sexual difference to bring it forth. In the *Excerpts*, the “strategies used to achieve this reinstatement of masculinism are presented in brief—and their larger theological and anthropological implications are not worked out in any thoroughgoing way.”³⁹ The other subjects of Dunning’s analysis, including Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and *On the Origin of the World*, do attempt such a “thoroughgoing” consideration of sexual difference. In each case, the specter of Paul undermines their pretensions to wholeness and self-sufficiency.

I agree with Dunning that it is reductive to see in early Christian texts only a simple “reinstatement of masculinism.” Early Christian discourse allows a wide array of possible articulations of sexual difference. Dunning’s study locates a structural, organizing principle that

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 47. Emphasis in original.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 49.

can both explain and document complexity and ultimate incoherence of ancient Christian articulations of sexual difference. I disagree with Dunning on two points, however. First, Dunning's reading of the *Excerpts* does not account for the multiple Sophia figures and in particular the evaluation of Wisdom. I will argue that the space opened up in Valentinian theology by the distinctions between divine female powers enables a variety of new articulations of sexual difference within *IApocJas*. The *Excerpts* argues both that salvation entails some form of becoming male and that Wisdom was responsible for the creation of the saved, spiritual aspect of humanity. This incongruity does not receive a full elaboration within the *Excerpts*, but in *IApocJas* an analogous understanding of the divine realms underlies many of the discussions of female martyrs and disciples.

Second, I do not think that Dunning's method will have as much explanatory power for a text like *IApocJas*. If the *Excerpts* are not extensive enough for the specter of Paul to emerge, then it is unlikely that the comparatively cursory discussions in *IApocJas* will suffice, either. Dunning's study critically punctures the pretensions to solidity and self-sufficiency of theological texts which purport to wholly explain sexual difference. *IApocJas*, too, in its discussion of theology and anthropology, does not map out all the contours of a complex intellectual problem, but rather it discusses only a small set of issues which are important for preparation for martyrdom. The text does not reject coherence, but a complete and self-sufficient envisioning of human sexual difference does not appear to be its primary end. In the next chapter, I will consider a set of further discussions of sexual difference which follow in the dialogue, when James asks about a group of female disciples and martyrs. These discussions reflect an improvisational search for space within various early Christian traditions for the

honoring of female disciples and martyrs. Completeness and self-sufficiency are not swept aside, but they appear to be secondary goals in these discussions.

These multiple articulations of sexual difference in *IApocJas*, then, have only provisional and partial coherence. For thinking more clearly about how these partial and provisional articulations work, I have found useful the writing of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick on sexual difference. Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet* offers a theoretical discussion of sex, gender, and sexuality which is premised on the notion that a broader array of differences exist than are accounted for in most contemporary discussions. Under the deceptively simple banner of the axiom, "People are different from each other," Sedgwick reminds us that these "inconceivably course axes" of sex and sexuality, as well as race and class, cannot capture the breadth of lived human difference.⁴⁰ As one example, the modern notion "sexuality" must encompass much more than only homosexual or heterosexual definition to consider how the same acts may be understood entirely differently, how object choice may be more or less fixed and more or less intellectually freighted, and so on.⁴¹

She insists that while these various methods of mapping out human difference are not philosophically systematized, they should be reasonably well understood among a contemporary audience. "Probably everybody who survives at all has reasonably rich, unsystematic resources of nonce taxonomy for mapping out the possibilities, dangers, and stimulations of their human social landscape."⁴² The phrasing Sedgwick uses to describe these resources is a little confusing—how can there be "resources" of "nonce taxonomy"? If something is a resource, one expects it can be used and re-used, not used once and never again, as "nonce" suggests. My

⁴⁰ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 22.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 24–26.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 22–23.

reading here is that Sedgwick uses the word “nonce” to emphasize that these unsystematic cultural resources are available for improvisational uses in the moment, peculiar to the particular problems for which they may be activated, and which may or may not be repeated. The key point I take from Sedgwick here is that cultural resources exist, though in a disorganized state, for various kinds of mappings of sexual difference.

I will argue that *IApocJas* seems to be depending on rich, unsystematic resources for thinking about sexual difference. The different answers which *IApocJas* gives to the question “concerning femaleness” offer insight into the unsystematic taxonomies of human difference available to and active for Christians living in a situation of possible persecution. *IApocJas* finds spaces within early Christian traditions for articulations of sexual difference which allow for the honoring of female disciples and martyrs. These articulations can only be seen if one begins by discarding the assumptions that ancient Christian articulations of sexual difference are monolithic and that these texts reinscribe masculinism in a simple and straightforward way.

Chapter 5: The Seven Women Whom All the Generations Bless

In this chapter, I will draw together two strands of analysis from the previous sections. In the third chapter, I interpreted the passages on the “seven women ... whom all the generations bless” in terms of the readings of scripture which underlie the discussions. In the fourth chapter, I argued that the theology of *IApocJas* allows for multiple articulations of sexual difference based on its envisioning of multiple female divine figures. Here I will argue that in the passage on the seven women, *IApocJas* builds from this theology a set of provisional articulations of sexual difference that explain the power and prestige of these honored women.

The passages on the seven women follow after the completion of Jesus’ long revelation speech. This speech is marked as the climax of the dialogue. After much prompting from James, Jesus finally tells him, “I will reveal to you your salvation” (†ΗΔΩΑΠ ΗΑΚ ΕΒΟΛ ΜΠΕΚΩΤΕ; 19.22–24). The speech which follows contains precisely the revelation James required. James feels his fear dissipate, and when the speech is complete, he says to Jesus, “I have come to believe all these things, and they are properly placed within what is in my soul” (ΔΕΙΡ [ΠΙ]CΤΕΥΕ ΕΝΔΙ ΤΗΡΟΥ ΑΥΩ ΑΥΖΗ [ΠΙ]ΕΤΖΗ ΤΑΨΥΧΗ ΚΑΛΩC; 25.5–17). One might expect this to mark the end of the dialogue. Instead, James asks a new series of questions, inquiring of Jesus about his female disciples. Only after Jesus has answered these further questions does the dialogue conclude, and only then does James go off for his martyrdom.

James’ questions about the seven women must be important, given that he asks them after he has received full theological revelation. Yet these seven women are new characters; they have no antecedent in the text. I suggest that, by the logic of *IApocJas*, James asks these questions precisely because of the foregoing discussion of theology and its implications for sexual difference. This theological economy has left open questions about sexual difference. Jesus’

discussions of sexual difference have mostly treated “femaleness” as the negatively-valenced aspect of the divine plurality. Salvation has been figured as the triumph over this femaleness. However, Jesus has also told James to invoke the power of female divine figures, who appear to be part of the positively-valenced plurality of the divine realms. The text asks, how can this theology harmonize with the stories of these seven women whom we hold in particular honor? Further, Jesus will present these women to James as moral exemplars to be followed in his preparation for martyrdom. They must find space for authorizing these women in order for the exhortation to martyrdom to be complete. The remainder of the dialogue consists of James and Jesus seeking to find justification for honoring these women. These passages demonstrate the multiple taxonomies available to *IApocJas* and the diverse set of ways in which sexual difference might be re-articulated within this Valentinian economy.

Rabbi, I have come to [believe] these things, and they are properly within what is in my soul. Still I will ask you this, who are the seven women who have become your disciples and all the generations bless them? I am amazed that, although they are in weak vessels, they have attained powers and perceptions.

ΠΑΒΒΕΙ ΔΕΙΡ [ΠΙ]ΣΤΕΥΕ ΕΝΔΙ ΤΗΡΟΥ ΑΥΩ ΑΥΖΗ [ΠΙ]ΕΤΖΗ ΤΑΪΥΧΗ ΚΑΛΩC ΕΤΙ ΤΗΑΩΠΙΝΕ
 ΜΟΚ ΕΠΑΪ ΝΙΜ ΝΕ ΤCΖCΕ ΝCΖΙΝΕ ΝΤΑΡ ΜΑΘΗΤΕΥΕ ΝΕΚ ΑΥΩ ΝΑΪ CΕΡ ΜΑΚΑΡΙΖΕ ΜΗΔΥ
 ΝΔΙ ΝΓΕΝΕΑ ΤΗΡΟΥ ΑΥΩ ΔΗΟΚ ΤΡ ΜΟΪΖΕ ΧΕ ΕΥΖΗ ΝΑΓΔΙΟΝ ΝCΩΒ ΑΥΩ ΑΥΔΙΝΕ ΝΖΝCΟΜ
 ΜΗ ΖΗΔΙCΘΗCΙC (25.15–26)

James says that he has come to understand all that has been revealed to him. This knowledge about the nature of the cosmos and the nature of the human enables James to become prepared for martyrdom. Again, that James has further questions suggests that this revelation has nonetheless been insufficient or incomplete. James says that he is amazed at the spiritual achievements of the seven female disciples of Jesus and the honor in which they are held. These women have not been mentioned previously in the text, but their presentation suggests that the reader ought to already know them. As already discussed above, this passage bears similarity to a passage in the *Sophia of Jesus Christ*. *SJC* also mentions “seven women who were his disciples”

(καὼϥε ἡςζῖμε ετε νεγμαθετεγε ηαϥ; BG 77.13–15). The content of *SJC* beyond this opening does not contain significant parallels to *IApocJas*, which suggests again the existence of an independent tradition of seven female disciples of Jesus.¹ It is impossible to determine exactly what this tradition consisted of beyond the attribution of discipleship to a set of women. A hypothesized tradition about seven women disciples can explain, at least, why the women would be introduced as if the reader or hearer should recognize them. The text assumes some degree of expertise from its readers regarding this early Christian tradition.

In response to James' amazement at the women, Jesus argues, "Properly are you amazed, but the son of man has come and revealed the secrets about the children of the light, so that they may have the secrets when they are revealed" (καλως κ̅ρ̅ μοῖζε ἀλλὰ ἀϥει ἡςι πωηρε η̅π̅ρωμε ἀϥοϥων̅ε ε̅βοα ἡ̅νε̅θ̅η̅τ̅ ε̅τ̅βε ἡ̅ω̅η̅ρε ἡ̅π̅ο̅ϥ̅ο̅ῖ̅η̅ χ̅ε̅κ̅α̅α̅ς̅ ε̅ϥ̅ζ̅ῖ̅ π̅ε̅τ̅ο̅ϥ̅ο̅ν̅ε̅ ε̅βοα; 25.25–26.4). It seems that James should not be amazed about the achievement of these women because they have received revelation. The description of these women as "children of the light" links them to James through a reading of *John*. Jesus has previously mentioned "children of the One Who Is" who come to realize "what is theirs and what is not theirs" (11.4–7). The achievement of recognizing one's own previously also appeared in the embedded dialogue in the long revelation speech (20.23–25). The state these women have achieved, then, receiving revelation and becoming "children of the light," resembles the state that Jesus exhorted James to achieve through the inculcation of knowledge. This section foreshadows the later establishment of these women as moral exemplars for James.

Jesus then moves on to describe the seven women in terms of a reading of *Isaiah* 11.2–3, which produces a group of honored female figures in the divine realms who have a special

¹ Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 71–72. See also Petersen, *Zerstört die Werke der Weiblichkeit!*, 243–248.

relationship to Jesus. The text brings up this reading of *Isaiah*, then, to provide scriptural backing for the honoring of Jesus' female disciples.

The seven women, they are the seven spirits who are introduced in this scripture: a spirit of wisdom [and] intelligence, a spirit of counsel [and] strength, [a] spirit of reason and knowledge, a spirit of fear. When <I> passed by the land of the great ruler, the one who is called Addon, I went up to him, and he was ignorant. And when I left him, he thought of me that I was his son, and he favored me as his own son. And before I appeared in these places, these (spirits) were already among this people, in the place where no prophet spoke without the seven spirits. And these are the seven spirits who have preached about me through the mouths of the people, just as they were able to speak, because I had not spoken with all strength. But I have come and I have fulfilled (it).

†ϭⲁⲱϣⲉ ⲛϭⲓⲙⲉ ⲉⲧⲉ ⲛⲉⲉⲓ ⲛⲉ ϭⲁⲱϣ ⲛⲡⲓⲛⲁ ⲛⲉ ⲛⲁⲓ ⲉⲱⲁⲓⲛⲧⲟⲩ ⲉⲓⲟⲩⲛ ⲓⲛ ⲧⲉⲓⲓⲣⲁⲓⲫⲏ
ⲟⲩⲧⲓⲛⲁ ⲛϭⲟⲫⲓⲁ ⲓⲓⲓ ⲛⲓⲛⲧⲓⲥⲁⲃⲉ ⲟⲩⲧⲓⲛⲁ ⲛϭⲟⲭⲛⲓⲉ ⲓⲓⲓ ⲓⲓⲟⲩⲛ ⲓⲓⲛⲁ ⲓⲓⲛⲟⲩ ⲓⲓ
ⲟⲩⲧⲓⲛⲁ ⲛⲓⲟⲧⲉ ⲛⲧⲉⲣⲉⲥⲓⲱⲱⲃⲉ ⲛⲡⲓⲕⲁⲓ ⲛⲡⲓⲛⲟⲥ ⲛⲁⲣⲭⲱⲛ ⲛⲉⲧⲉⲱⲁⲓⲛⲓⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲉⲣⲟϥ ϭⲉ
ⲁⲗⲗⲱⲛ ⲁⲉⲓⲱⲱⲕ ⲉⲓⲟⲩⲛ ⲱⲁⲣⲟϥ ⲁⲓⲱ ⲛⲧⲟϥ ⲉϥⲟ ⲛⲁⲧϥⲓⲟⲩⲛⲉ ⲛⲓⲧⲉⲣⲓⲉⲓ ⲁⲉ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛⲓⲙⲟϥ
ⲛⲉϥⲙⲉⲟⲩⲉ ⲉⲣⲟⲓⲉⲓ ⲛⲉ ϭⲉ ⲁⲛⲓⲣ ⲛⲉϥϣⲱⲛⲣⲉ ⲁⲓⲱ ⲁϥⲭⲁⲣⲓϥⲉ ⲛⲁⲉⲓ ⲓⲱϥ ⲛⲉϥϣⲱⲛⲣⲉ ⲛⲓⲙⲓⲛ
ⲙⲟϥ ⲁⲓⲱ ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲓⲁ ⲧⲉⲓⲛ ⲉⲙⲡⲁⲓⲟⲩⲱⲛⲓⲉ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲉⲓ ⲙⲁ ⲁⲣⲁ ⲛⲉⲩⲱⲟⲟⲛ ⲛⲓⲁⲓ ⲛⲁⲉⲓ ⲓⲛ
ⲡⲓⲗⲁⲟϥ ⲉⲧⲉ ⲛⲁⲉⲓ ⲛⲉ ⲛⲓⲁ ⲉⲧⲉ ⲛⲡⲉⲡⲣⲟⲫⲏⲧⲏϥ ⲱⲁϭⲉ ϭⲱⲣⲓϥ ⲛⲓϭⲁⲱϣ ⲛⲡⲓⲛⲁ ⲁⲓⲱ ⲛⲁⲉⲓ
ⲛⲉ ⲛⲓϭⲁⲱϣ ⲛⲡⲓⲛⲁ ⲛⲧⲁⲩⲧⲁⲱⲉ ⲟⲉⲓⲱ ⲉⲧⲱⲛⲧ ⲓⲓⲧⲓⲛ ⲧⲧⲁⲡⲣⲟ ⲛⲓⲣⲱⲛⲉ ⲕⲁⲧⲁ ⲱⲉ ⲛⲧⲁⲩⲩⲙⲥⲟⲙ
ⲉϭⲟⲟⲩ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϭⲉ ⲛⲡⲓϭⲱ ⲛⲧⲥⲟⲙ ⲧⲏⲣϥ ⲓⲓⲛⲟⲕ ⲁⲉ ⲓⲁⲉⲓⲉⲓ ⲁⲉⲓϭⲱⲕ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ (26.4–27.2)

This passage adds detail to the text's imagination of the divine realms through a theological interpretation of *Isaiah*. Among the rulers who are the agents of femaleness, we now meet the great ruler Addon. He can be added to the toll collectors, the three who take away the soul, and other unspecified rulers. By contrast, these spirits of prophecy must be agents of the One Who Is, not of femaleness. They precede Jesus and inspire true prophecy about him. The text does not mention here the "undefiled Sophia," but the description of the seven spirits was foreshadowed by the invocation of Sophia. Jesus further elaborates the positive plurality of the divine realms introduced through the higher Sophia. Sophia is no longer the only honored female inhabitant of the divine realms. The seven spirits are another group of female divine powers. The seven women disciples, by Jesus' logic, deserve honor because of their typological relation to the seven spirits. The existence of female figures in the divine realms authorizes female disciples in this world. When *IApocJas* seeks to explain the blessedness of these female disciples, the

explanation draws from and elaborates upon the positive aspects of gendered plurality in the divine realms.

In these first passages on the seven women, then, Jesus rejects as unimportant an articulation of sexual difference based in bodily difference. He reveals the activity of various divine female figures, whom he claims as analogues for his women disciples. The positive aspects of plurality in the divine realms, within which there may be a variety of female powers and spirits, become the explanation for the honored status of these disciples.

The next passage in the revelation offers an ethical interpretation of *Isaiah* 11.2–3. Jesus claims that James should take three of the seven women as objects of imitation. They are moral exemplars who have achieved the transformations to which James has been exhorted. This idea that the women might be models for imitation is suggested by the previous mention of them as “children of the light” who receive Jesus’ revelation, and it is confirmed here.

Be persuaded by this other (example), which is that of Salome, Mary, and Arsinoe, whom I will introduce to you, since [they] are worthy of the One Who Is. For they have become sober, and they have cast off the blindness which was in their minds, and they have come to know who I am.

ῑ πῑθεσῑαι οἱ ηἰπερικεοῡα εἰτε σαλωμῑ ηἱ μαριζαμμην αῡω αρσινοη και εἰναῖ
συνηιστα ῑμαῡ ηεκ ε[γ]ῑπῡα ῑπετωοοι και γαρ αῡῑ ηηφε αῡω αῡ[η]οῡχε [ε]βοα
ῑτμ[η]τβλαε εἰτην [η]εγῡητ αῡ[ω] αῡῑ νοῖ ημοῖ χε ανοκ οῡο[γ] (27.25–28.5)²

² In Nag Hammadi Codex V, this passage is not well-preserved, but the names Mary and Salome are clearly visible, and it is reasonable to reconstruct [αρσ]ινοη. There is a remaining lacuna before “Arsinoe” which Schoedel had hypothesized contained “Martha.” If this reconstruction is correct, then there are four names in the NHC version and three in the TC version. I think it is more likely that the reconstruction by Uwe-Karsten Plisch and Imke Schletterer here is correct. They hypothesized that the lacuna could read “Mary [Magdalene]” and that there would be only three women listed. Since the TC version also lists only three disciples here, Plisch’s hypothesis seems to have good support. Brankaer and Bethge have suggested that four disciples are still more likely, and it could have been “[another Mary].” In this case, the two Marys could have been conflated in the production of the Tchacos Codex. As such, NHC V refers to Mary, Salome, and Arsinoe, and it may refer again to another Mary. Uwe-Karsten Plisch and Imke Schletterer, “Die (erste) Apokalypse des Jakobus (NHC V,3),” in *Nag Hammadi Deutsch* (ed. Hans-Gebhard Bethge et. al.; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003), 304–310; Brankaer and Bethge, *Codex Tchacos*, 243–244.

As I have argued, each of these characteristics matches to an exhortation that Jesus has previously made to James.³ The earlier suggestion that these women precede James as Jesus' disciples and as recipients of revelation is confirmed. This passage serves as well to explain why James has asked about the seven women. They are exemplars whose lead James must follow in his progress in knowledge and self-transformation.

The names of these women are significant. *IApocJas* provides their names as if this is important information, yet it fails to give any further explanation of their importance. In a learned discussion, Silke Petersen demonstrates that other early Christian texts also link these particular women with each other and that they do so within a context of debates regarding sexual difference.⁴ One finds Mary and Salome together heading to Jesus' tomb in *Mark* 16.1. Further, a Syriac fragment, hypothesized to be dependent on Tatian's *Diatessaron*, tells a version of the empty tomb story in which an otherwise unknown Arsinoe joins Mary and Salome.⁵ The *Manichean Psalmbook II* 192.21–22 also includes Arsinoe along with Mary, Martha, and Salome as disciples of Jesus.⁶ *IApocJas*, then, likely draws on stories told of women disciples, which built upon gospel passages and developed traditions of honored women who could serve as paradigmatic Christians for the community of *IApocJas*.⁷

³ See chapter 3, pages 92–95.

⁴ Petersen, *Zerstört die Werke der Weiblichkeit!*, 248–253.

⁵ William L. Peterson, “An Important Unnoticed Diatessaronic Reading in Turfan Fragment M-18,” in *Patristic and Text-Critical Studies: The Collected Essays of William L. Petersen* (eds. Jan Krans and Joseph Verheyden; Leiden: Brill, 2011), 88–93.

⁶ See Richard Bauckham, “Salome the Sister of Jesus, Salome the Disciple of Jesus, and the *Secret Gospel of Mark*,” *Novum Testamentum* 33 (1991), 258; Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 213; Petersen, *Zerstört die Werke der Weiblichkeit!*, 252.

⁷ Petersen's analysis, drawing on work by Judith Hartenstein, locates these revelation dialogues within the reception-history of the Gospels and related literature. As Christians told stories about Jesus and his disciples, they often turned to the post-resurrection setting to lay out further teachings of Jesus and further stories about important disciples. Petersen, *Zerstört die Werke der Weiblichkeit!*, 40–43; Hartenstein, *Die zweite Lehre*, 298–311.

Salome and Mary are particularly notable here. When early Christian literature depicts Jesus in conversation with a female disciple, that disciple is almost always either Mary or Salome.⁸ In *IApocJas* these women appear as ideal disciples of Jesus, women who have received revelation and transformed themselves accordingly. It makes sense that, in presenting women who have received revelation, *IApocJas* would consider women who were remembered as being dialogue partners of Jesus. This tradition explains how they received special revelation. As I will argue below, Mary and Salome also play roles in early Christian discourses about sexual difference and so their presence here foreshadows the larger discussion of sexual difference that is to follow.

These passages also help explain why James was concerned to ask about these women. His preparation for martyrdom depends on his proper imitation of their example. After presenting Salome, Mary, and Arsinoe to James as moral exemplars, Jesus explains how they have become moral exemplars using a sacrificial metaphor drawn from interpretation of *Leviticus*.

This is according to the foreknowledge of the Father, because he sent me as a priest. And in every place are reckoned the first-fruits and the firstborn [in] the [great sacrifice]. One receives the first-fruits and assigns sacrifices and offerings. But I do not act in this way. Rather, I receive the first-fruits of the defiled ones so that I may send them up [un]defiled, so that the true power is revealed. For the defiled has separated from the undefiled and the work <of the female> has attained to the male. (Or, “the true work has attained to the male.”)

ΠΑΙ ΚΑΤΑ ΤΕΠΡΟΝΟΙΑ ΜΗΨ[Τ] ΧΕ ΑΓΓΗΝΟΟΥ ΜΟΙ ΠΟΥΗΗΒ ΑΥΨ [2]Μ ΜΑ ΝΙΜ ΣΕΗΠ ΝΤΕ
 ΝΑΪ Μ[Ν]ΑΠΑΡΧΗ ΑΥΨ ΜΩΡΠ ΜΗΪΣΕ 2[Μ ΠΕ]Ε[ΜΗΟ6 ΜΘ]ΥΟC ΕΤΕ ΠΑΕΙ Π[Ε] ΨΑΔΧΙ
 ΜΝΑΠΑΡΧΗ ΑΥΨ ΨΑ[ΔΡ]ΩΨΕ ΜΘΥCΙΑ 2Ι ΠΡΟCΦΟΡ[Α] ΑΝΟΚ ΔΕ ΜΤΕΕΙ2Ε ΑΝ ΑΛΛ[Α]
 ΕΨΑΪΧΙ ΜΝΑΠΑΡΧΗ ΜΗΕΤΧ[Α2]Μ ΜΤΑΤΝΟΟΥCΟΥ ΕΥΟ Μ[ΑΤ]ΧΩ2Η Χ[Ε]ΚΑΔC
 ΕCΗΑΟΥΨΗ2 ΕΒΟΛ ΜΙ ΤCΟΜ ΜΗΕ ΧΕ ΑΠΧΩ2Η ΠΩΡΧ ΕΒΟΛ ΕΥΜΗΤΑΤΧΩ2Η ΑΥΨ ΦΩΒ
 <ΜΤΕC2Ι>ΜΕ ΑΚΚΑΤΑΝΤΑ ΕΦΑΥΤ (28.6–28.20)

⁸ For Mary, see *DialSav* 131.19–144.22; *John* 20; *Gospel of Thomas* 21; *SJC* 98.9, 114.8; *Gospel of Mary* 10.10–17.7. For Salome, see *Gospel of the Egyptians*, *GosThom* 61. See Petersen, *Zerstört die Werke der Weiblichkeit!*, 94–241.

The Nag Hammadi version is too fragmentary to compare the first sentences, though “burnt offerings” (ϩΕΝΘΛΙΑ; V 41.8) and “first-fruits” ([Δ]ΠΑΡΧΗ; V 41.11) can both be read, confirming the priestly comparison. The final section of the passage is mostly preserved. It reads, “...so that the power [of truth] is revealed, that the perishable has gone up to the imperishable, and the work of femaleness has attained to the work of maleness” ([Χ]ΕΚΑΔΑΓ [ΕCΕΟΥ]ΩΝΩ̅ ΕΒΟΛΑ̅ Ν̅ΔΙ Τ̅ΔΟΜ [Ν̅ΤΜΗΕ Χ]Ε ΔΠΙΤΑΚΟ ΔCΠ̅ΧΩΡΙ [ΕΖΡ]ΔΙ̅ ΕΠΙΑΤΤΑΚΟ ΔΥΩ [Φ]ΩΒ Ν̅Τ̅Μ̅Ν̅ΤC̅ΖΙΜΕ ΔCΠ̅ΚΑΤΑΝΤΑ ΕΖΡΑΙ̅ ΕΦΩΒ Ν̅ΤΕ̅Ι̅Μ̅Ν̅Τ̅Ζ̅ΟΟΥΤ; V 41.13–18).⁹ Where the Tchacos Codex reads “true work” (ΦΩΒ Ν̅ΜΕ), Nag Hammadi Codex V, which luckily is extant for a few lines at this point, reads “the work of femaleness” ([Φ]ΩΒ Ν̅Τ̅Μ̅Ν̅ΤC̅ΖΙΜΕ) (41.17). This is a significant divergence.

Editors of the Tchacos Codex have argued that this divergence arose from a scribal error, suggested by the divergence of the TC version here from the NHC V version as well as by the problematic logic of the passage. The statement “the true work has attained to the work of the male” does not connect cleanly to the logic of the passage preceding it. The passage has set up an expectation that an object or person in a defiled state should be transformed to an undefiled state. The “true work” does not need to attain anything. It is not defiled. The passage’s doubtful meaning could suggest a scribal error. Further, a plausible hypothesis for the cause of this error can be extrapolated from the physical alignment of the writing in the codex. The phrase Τ̅ΔΟΜ Ν̅ΜΕ appears just two lines above, and the Ν̅ΜΕ construction could have been carried down. For these reasons, I follow Kasser/Wurst and Bethge/Brankaer in hypothesizing a scribal error here, and I think the better reading of *IApocJas* here is “the work of the female” or the NHC V “the

⁹ Schoedel had hypothesized “the power [of God]” (Τ̅ΔΟΜ [Ν̅ΠΠΟΥΤ]Ε) in the lacuna on line 15 in NHC V. Given given that the TC version reads “the true power,” I find Brankaer and Bethge’s hypothesized reconstruction here “the power [of truth], that...” (Τ̅ΔΟΜ [Ν̅ΤΜΗΕ Χ]Ε) to be more likely. See Brankaer and Bethge, *Codex Tchacos*, 125.

work of femaleness.”¹⁰ However, as I will discuss later, the existence of a scribal error here may provide evidence that the logic of the text here was not easy for ancient scribes to follow.

This discussion of sexual difference, contrasting the work of the female with the work of the male, develops from a reading of *Leviticus*. *Leviticus* distinguishes between “blemished” and “unblemished” sacrificial offerings. *IApocJas* identifies the priest in *Leviticus* who only receives “unblemished” offerings as an anti-type of Christ, by connecting the notion of being blemished to categories of defilement and perishability. One can understand Christ as a superior form of the priest. Unlike the priest in *Leviticus* who receives what is already perfect, Christ takes what is defiled or perishable and transforms it to the undefiled or imperishable. This priestly comparison serves to explain how the women have become exemplars. They have been transformed by Christ. By his giving of revelation, Christ has enabled these women to turn from the defiled to the undefiled, to achieve salvation and moral perfection.

The mention of the “work of femaleness” or “the work of the female” in this passage then connects the discussion of the seven women to earlier theological discussions of sexual difference. “Femaleness” and “the female” in *IApocJas* function as technical terms, referring to Achamoth, the lower Sophia. At the same time, a similar state of undefilement has been previously attributed to the higher Sophia. Once again, the discussion of the seven women seems to depend upon certain theological articulations of sexual difference. Here, the concept of “the work of femaleness” is raised for the first time in the text. To explain how this passage functions,

¹⁰ Both Kasser/Wurst and Bethge/Brankaer propose the emendation “the <female> work” (ΦΩΒ <ΠΓΖΙ>ΗΕ). The reconstruction of a definite noun here that I suggest (“the female”; ΦΩΒ <ΠΤΕΓΖΙ>ΗΕ) has three benefits. First, it produces a better parallel within the TC version, as the work of the female attains to the (definite) male. Second, it accords better with the NHC V version, wherein we see “the work of femaleness,” referring to the divine figure responsible for creation. Third, it accords better with the language of *IApocJas* up to this point, where the terms “the female” and “femaleness” have a technical referent of Achamoth.

I need to contextualize the notion of “the work of femaleness” within ancient Christian discourse on sexual difference.

The Works of Femaleness

This passage in *IApocJas* calls for the surpassing or triumph over “the work (or works) of femaleness” in the context of a discussion about female disciples, including Mary and Salome. This same set of concerns and characters—the triumph over the work of femaleness and these particular female disciples—appears not only in this text, but in two other places in early Christian literature. In the *Dialogue of the Savior*, Mary talks about “the work of femaleness” with Jesus. In the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, preserved by Clement of Alexandria in the third book of his *Stromateis*, Salome questions Jesus on the topic of “the works of femaleness.” The association of Mary and Salome with the “works of femaleness” suggests that *IApocJas* is engaging with a known ancient tradition. *DialSav* offers an articulation of sexual difference on bodily and practical lines, reading “the works of femaleness” to refer both to particular capacities for gestation and birthing, and to sexual practices. In the *Stromateis*, it is possible to see the contours of a larger debate. Clement responds to others who have read “the works of femaleness” as having a particular bodily meaning, and he focuses instead on intellectual and emotional differences.

The *Dialogue of the Savior* consists of a dialogue between Jesus and his disciples, of whom Judas, Matthew, and Mary are named in the text as preserved.¹¹ Toward the end of the

¹¹ For the text and translation of the *Dialogue of the Savior*, see Stephen Emmel, ed., *Nag Hammadi Codex III,5: The Dialogue of the Savior* (NHS 26; Leiden: Brill, 1984), 37–95. See also Martin Krause, “Der Dialog des Soter in Codex III von Nag Hammadi,” in *Gnosis and Gnosticism: Papers read at the Seventh International Conference on Patristic Studies, Oxford, September 8th–13th, 1975* (ed. Martin Krause; NHS 8; Leiden: Brill, 1977); Helmut Koester and Elaine Pagels, “Introduction,” in Emmel, *Nag Hammadi Codex III,5*, 1–17; PHEME PERKINS, *The Gnostic Dialogue: The Early Church and the Crisis of Gnosticism* (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 107–112; Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 79–93; Petersen, *Zerstört die Werke der Weiblichkeit!*, 79–90.

text, Jesus discusses practices of prayer. He states that prayer should occur “in the place where there is no woman.” His disciples Matthew and Mary then respond:

The Lord said, “Pray in the place where there is no woman.”
Matthew said, “Pray in the place where there is [no woman], he tells us, meaning, “destroy the works of femaleness,” (ΕΡΙΚΑΤΑΛΥΕ ΝΗ[Ε] ΖΒΟΥΕ ΝΤΗΝΤCΖΙΜΕ) not because there is any other [manner of birth], but because they will cease [giving birth].”
Mary said, “They will never be obliterated.”¹²

This saying, in *DialSav*, defines the “works of femaleness” in terms of the production of children. When women cease giving birth, the “works of femaleness” will be destroyed. Mary’s response is ambiguous, and the conclusion of the discussion following Mary’s response is not preserved. Both Robert Doran and Silke Petersen read Mary’s response as an assertion that women will not be obliterated, although the “works of femaleness” will cease.¹³ In that case, the text makes an argument for sexual renunciation in order that no one gives birth. The discussion of sexual difference here locates difference in a particular bodily and practical way. In much ancient medical literature, women’s difference was localized in the womb.¹⁴ In *DialSav*, this bodily difference expands to incorporate practical difference: sexual intercourse along with the bodily processes of gestation and birth are classified as “works of femaleness.” To “destroy the works of femaleness” in *DialSav* means to cause certain bodily processes to cease by refraining from sexual activity. In this articulation, men and women differ according to bodily organs and processes, and particular sexual practices are coded as female because of their relation to

¹² NHC III 144.15–23. Translation Emmel, slightly altered. I have translated ΝΗ[Ε] ΖΒΟΥΕ ΝΤΗΝΤCΖΙΜΕ here as “works of femaleness” (144.19–20).

¹³ Robert Doran, “To Bear or not to Bear: The Argument for Abstinence in the *Greek Gospel of the Egyptians*,” in *Women and Gender in Ancient Religions* (ed. Stephen Ahearne-Kroll, Paul Holloway, and James Kelhoffer; Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck), 2010), 179–180; Petersen, *Zerstört die Werke der Weiblichkeit!*, 210–211.

¹⁴ “The female has her illness in common with the male, she suffers from constriction or from flux, either chronically or acutely.” The only differences appear in the “functions” of “conception, parturition, and lactation,” and in the “particulars” or “localizations” of her diseases. Soranus, *Gynecology* 3.5. Translation from Owsei Temkin, trans., *Soranus’ Gynecology* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1991).

women's bodies. I will return to this point, but what I want to draw from *DialSav* is that it would be possible to read "the works of femaleness" as an articulation of bodily difference.

The range of possible interpretations of the "works of femaleness" becomes apparent in a discussion from the third book of Clement of Alexandria's *Stromateis*.¹⁵ Clement is engaged in a dispute with multiple opponents when he brings up the "works of femaleness." By describing the opinions which these opponents hold, he provides a useful, if highly polemical, compendium of possible interpretations of the "works of femaleness" in ancient Christian discourse of sexual difference. Clement describes these opponents as, on the one side, extreme libertines who place few restrictions on lawful sexuality, and, on the other side, extreme ascetics who call for complete celibacy for all.¹⁶ The rhetorical strategy of depicting his opponents as extremists allows him to arrogate to himself the presumed superior middle position. He accepts the occurrence of sexual intercourse in marriage, but calls for Christians to renounce and extirpate all passion and desire. Only sex in the absence of desire is acceptable. As Kathy Gaca puts it, for Clement, "it is flagrant adultery to experience even a flutter of the sexual appetite."¹⁷

¹⁵ For translation, see John Ferguson, trans. *Clement of Alexandria: Stromateis: Books One to Three* (Fathers of the Church 85; Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1991). For Greek text, see Otto Stählin and Ludwig Früchtel, eds., *Clemens Alexandrinus : Stromata Buch I–VI* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1985).

¹⁶ *Stromateis*, 3.5.40

¹⁷ Gaca, *The Making of Fornication*, 270. As Gaca points out, Clement's purported middle position differs only slightly from that of his "ascetic" opponents in comparison to the vast gulf between him and the "libertines". On Clement and sexual difference, see also Jean-Paul Boudéhoux, *Mariage et famille chez Clément d'Alexandrie* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1970); David Hunter, "The Language of Desire: Clement of Alexandria's Transformation of Ascetic Discourse," *Semeia* 57 (1992), 95–111; Kari Elisabeth Børreson, "God's Image, Man's Image? Patristic Interpretation of Gen. 1.27 and 1 Cor. 11.7," in *The Image of God: Gender Models in the Judeo-Christian Tradition* (ed. Kari Elisabeth Børreson; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 187–209; Denise Kimber Buell, "Ambiguous Legacy: A Feminist Commentary on Clement of Alexandria's Works," in *A Feminist Companion to Patristic Literature* (ed. Amy Jo Levine; London: T&T Clark, 2008), 26–55; Judith L. Kovacs, "Becoming the Perfect Man: Clement of Alexandria on the Philosophical Life of Women," in *Women and Gender in Ancient Religions*, 401–425; Dunning, *Specters of Paul*, 51–74.

When Clement discusses the “work of femaleness,” he is engaged in a dispute with his rhetorically constructed ascetic opponents. He takes up the interpretation of a passage from an otherwise lost text, the *Gospel of the Egyptians*. Clement quotes the text, provides a short summary of his opponents’ views, and then provides his own interpretation.

Those who attack God’s creation under the pious name of self-control quote the words spoken to Salome, which we have mentioned previously. I fancy the passage comes from the *Gospel according to the Egyptians*. They maintain that the Savior personally said, “I am come to destroy the works of femaleness.” “Femaleness” refers to sexual desire, and its works are birth and decay. So what are they to say? Has this world order been undone? They could never say so. The universe remains in the same condition. But the Lord did not speak falsely. In reality he brought to nothing the works of desire—the love of money, or winning, or glory, craziness over women, a passion for boys, gluttony, profligacy and the like. The birth of these means decay in the soul, if we become “dead in sins.” This is what is meant by “female” lack of self-control. Birth and decay in creation are bound to take place in accordance with the divine principle until the time of total dissolution and the restoration of the elect, an event through which the beings which are mixed up with the material world are also assigned to their true condition.¹⁸

Clement claims later that his opponents interpret these snippets of the *Gospel of the Egyptians* as a straightforward call to celibacy, a claim that “marriage ... is a sin.”¹⁹ In the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, it seems that Jesus has told Salome that she must “destroy the works of femaleness.” Clement later cites another passage from *GosEg* in which the savior is asked by Salome, “How long will human beings go on dying?” He responds, “As long as women give birth.”²⁰ Based on these snippets, we can conjecture that the *Gospel of the Egyptians* was concerned with the nature of the human life-cycle. It is impossible to know with any more precision what the *Gospel of the Egyptians* was about, but the text apparently took the notion of the “works of femaleness” to

¹⁸ *Stromateis* 3.5.63 (Ferguson).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.5.67.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.5.64.

refer to pregnancy and birth.²¹ Clement mocks his opponents for undermining the order of creation in the name of “self-control,” and he claims they have interpreted this saying of Jesus as a straightforward call to sexual renunciation. For these opponents, if Clement is correct, the “works of femaleness” refer to pregnancy and birth. They exhort Christians to renounce sexual practice in order to end the cycle of birth and death. Clement’s opponents, then, interpret “the works of femaleness” in the same way as the *Dialogue of the Savior*. Sexual difference is mapped on bodies and practices, and by ceasing sexual practices that lead to the birth of children, the “works of femaleness” are destroyed.

For Clement, by contrast, the saying of Jesus has an allegorical meaning. The “works of femaleness,” he says, simply refer to “sexual desire.” What Christians are called to renounce, then, is not sex, but desire. The death and dissolution which follow from the “works of femaleness” are not caused by birth, but by the lack of self-control when the person remains ruled by his or her passions. When one practices self-mastery, seeking to extirpate passion rather than renouncing sex, one destroys “the works of femaleness” in accordance with the ruling of Jesus. “Femaleness” is defined here according to an understanding of the passions by which to be moved by the passions was to take a passive and therefore feminized role. Dunning explains that the passions function for Clement “as a troubling force internal to the soul, one which can render the human being passive (and therefore must be countered through active techniques of self-control and mastery).”²² This argument works by a bodily, sexual analogy. The intellect or soul

²¹ On the possible original arrangement of *GosEg*, see Petersen, *Zerstört die Werke der Weiblichkeit!*, 203–210. Petersen argues that *GosEg* was not necessarily calling its readers and hearers to sexual abstinence, but instead it can be reconstructed as describing a new state of humanity. Doran and Klauck both read these passages as unambiguous exhortations to sexual renunciation. Doran, 179–180; Hans-Josef Klauck, *Apocryphal Gospels: An Introduction* (trans. Brian McNeil; New York: T&T Clark, 2000), 57–58.

²² Dunning, *Specters of Paul*, 70. On this connection between the passions, passivity, and femininity, see also Hunter, “The Language of Desire;” Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans*, 42–82; Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 198–228; Moore, *God’s Beauty Parlor*, 146–169.

which is moved by the passions thus becomes “passive” in relation to them. This passivity is analogized to a “passive” female body as the receptive partner in sexual intercourse. Clement articulates sexual difference according to the passions and according to the mode of governance of the self and the soul. He advocates practices of ethical transformation by which “feminine” desire may be extirpated and replaced with “masculine” self-control.

For my purposes, it is not important precisely who Clement’s opponents might be or the exact sense of the passage in the *Gospel of the Egyptians*. These different interpretations and multiple embedded citations demonstrate the existence of a complex debate over the interpretation of the phrase, “the works of femaleness.” For *IApocJas* to bring this concept into play, at such a crucial place in the text, constitutes an engagement with this ongoing debate as reflected in Clement’s text. *IApocJas* shares with Clement, *DialSav*, and *GosEg* not only the terminology, but also the names of Mary and Salome as female disciples who have received revelation. By mentioning “the work of femaleness” within the discussion of the female disciples, *IApocJas* enters into the ongoing discussion among Christians over what these works might be.

IApocJas’ use of “the work of femaleness” differs from all the interpretations put forward by Clement. *IApocJas* has already given the reader the tools to understand “femaleness,” which has been identified with Achamoth, the divine figure responsible for the creation of this world. The “works of femaleness” must refer not simply to birth nor to the passions, but to all those created aspects of the world which draw their being from Achamoth rather than from the One Who Is. To “attain to the work of maleness” is to return to primal oneness within the One Who Is (13.22–14.2). The dissolution of the work of femaleness, then, refers to the surpassing of femaleness in the process of human salvation. Sexual difference for

Clement depended on a theory of the emotions and a set of practices. In *1ApocJas*, “femaleness” is mapped according to a theological myth.

While the articulations of sexual difference in *1ApocJas* and Clement differ significantly, they seem at first to invoke similar gendered hierarchies. As Dunning argues, Clement’s vision of human perfection “is always already implicated in the eschatological translation of the female into the male.”²³ The achievement of self-control that Clement exhorts to his readers needs to be understood as a triumph over desire, which he has defined as “the work of femaleness.”

Clement’s vision of human perfection and sexual difference fits in this sense with the discussion of femaleness in *1ApocJas*. Christ’s action enables these women to proceed from defilement to undefilement so that they can enter into the perfection of the divine realms. The rupture in the divine realms was caused by femaleness. The work of femaleness attains to the work of maleness when they come to be wholly within the One Who Is. The articulation of sexual difference, then, suggests femaleness as differentiation must be overcome in human salvation. This passage makes the claim most strongly, by differentiating the “work of femaleness” from the “work of maleness.” This sounds like Clement’s economy, in which the perfection of these women can only be understood in terms of a transformation to maleness.

The problem for such a reading of *1ApocJas* is that we have already met the “undefiled Sophia” and the seven spirits. Becoming undefiled and fully enmeshed within the divine realms does not necessarily correspond to an eschatological transformation to maleness in *1ApocJas*. I

²³ Dunning, *Specters of Paul*, 52–53. Dunning goes on to argue that Clement’s system fails to attain coherence because Clement is unable to fully separate desire from the human person. The “desire” whose extirpation Clement advocates is already implicated in the division of male and female. The perfect maleness of God and the ideal Christian, then, cannot be fully “male” without desire and the sexual relationship. Dunning sees lurking here again the “specter of Paul”, as it is Adam’s sexual desire which cannot be fully eradicated in the envisioning of the perfect Christ. “If some aspect of *epithymia* resists externalization, but is in fact internal to the fallen Adam—not only as prototypical generic human but also as the prototype of masculinity—then to overcome that desire, God must ultimately eradicate both male and female.” *Ibid.*, 72. Because the concern of *1ApocJas* is not desire but rather the ultimate origin of the aspects of the self and the world, *1ApocJas* diverges from Clement at this point.

argue that this difficulty in the text can be explained with reference to the two Sophias and the two aspects of plurality in Valentinian theology. The earlier section on the spirits of prophecy aligned the seven women with the higher Sophia and other female figures fully within the divine realms. In this section, by contrast, the authorization of Mary, Salome, and Arsinoe works by radically distinguishing them from the lower Achamoth. They are thus doubly honored. Not only do these women have a typological connection to divine spirits of prophecy, they are also wholly free from the control of the rulers and Achamoth.

Thus, two quite different articulations of sexual difference serve to establish Mary, Salome, and Arsinoe as honored disciples. Each of these claims is dependent on one of the aspects of plurality in Valentinian theology. Salvation can be figured as a surpassing of femaleness because of Achamoth. To be saved, one must free oneself from any association with the negative aspect of divine plurality, the world created by femaleness. In this articulation of sexual difference, femaleness relates to maleness as the inessential aspect of reality to be discarded in salvation. However, *I ApocJas* also recalls the higher Sophia by describing the transformed state the women achieve as “undefiled.” The contrast between Achamoth and Sophia suggests that these women have been perfected, removed from the line of Achamoth and rejoined to the line of Sophia. The perfecting of the female without her corresponding transformation to maleness implies an articulation of sexual difference which allows for perfected humanity to be female or male, in relation to either male or female powers in the divine realms.

While these two articulations of sexual difference can be explained in relation to the text’s theology, they still conflict rather than complement each other. The reinstatement of masculinism implied by the discussion of the “work of femaleness” does not leave room open for

the honoring of women in relation to divine female figures. On the other hand, when *IApocJas* invokes the divine Sophia and the spirits of prophecy in relation to the seven women disciples, there is no concomitant rejection of the male. The two strategies here conflict, and they do not mirror each other in their differences.

Further evidence for this tension appears in the textual record of *IApocJas*. In the Tchacos Codex, the passage on the “work of the female” appears to have been altered due to a scribal error. It reads, “the true work has attained to the male” (28.19–20). Based on comparison to the NHC V version and on grounds of internal logic, I have treated this passage as simply an error—it should have read, “the work of the female has attained to the male.” My analysis shows however that this more likely reading still does not solve every interpretive problem. The discussion of the “work of the female” in *IApocJas* suggests that attaining to the divine realms requires a complete transformation to maleness. This discussion conflicts with the earlier passages in which a variety of female figures appear in the divine realms. Further, James’ preparation for martyrdom requires the imitation of honored female disciples and martyrs, implying a power relationship in which these women are authorized above James. A variety of tensions in the text arise due to the phrase, “the work of the female.” It is possible, then, that the textual variant in the Tchacos Codex reflects a scribal correction of a problematic passage, because of uncertainty over the meaning of the text.

Another textual variant provides some support for my interpretation of the textual variants. When James first introduces the seven women in his question, the Tchacos Codex reads, “who are the seven women who have become your disciples and whom all the generations bless?” (25.18–22). NHC V differs here. It reads, “Who are the [seven] women who have become your disciples, and look, all women bless you” (†[CΔΩ]ϥΕ̅ N̅C2IME̅ NIM NE̅ N̅TΔΥ[ᾀ

μα]ΘΗΤΗC ΝΑΚ ΔΥΩ ΕΙC 2[ΗΗΤΕ] CΕΡ̄ΜΑΚΑΡΙΖΕ Ν̄ΜΟΚ [Ν]ΔΙ C2ΙΜΕ ΝΙΜ; V 38.16–20). In the Nag Hammadi version, the seven women attest to the blessedness of Jesus. The Tchacos Codex version, on the other hand, establishes the women much more clearly as honored disciples whose blessedness will require some explanation. The Tchacos Codex may reflect a tradition in which the female disciples were considered relatively more important to the meaning of the text. If this is true, it could follow that the copyists of the TC might be more troubled by the tensions produced by the passage on “the work of the female.” These textual variants help to demonstrate the existence of overlapping and conflicting articulations of sexual difference in the text.

The Three Women Martyrs and the Power of Imitation

I ApocJas seeks out these different possible articulations of sexual difference in order to establish the honored status of the seven women disciples. The passage following the discussion of the “work of femaleness” confirms the importance of the seven women for the text’s exhortation to martyrdom. Having received Jesus’ explanation of his priestly transformation of his disciples, James responds with another confusing question about “the three,” and Jesus tells him about three female martyrs.

(James:) Rabbi, these three, then, perished and did not suffer, when they were worthy and were persecuted by [others] and things were said about them which are not (true)?

(Jesus:) James, it is not necessary for anyone to perish. These three, they are separated from a place of faith, for [they have received] hidden knowledge. These are the names of the three: Sapphira, Susanna, and Johanna.

ΡΑΒΒΕΙ †ΩΟΜ̄ΗΤΕ ΔΕ ΔΥΤΑΚΟ ΗΠΟΥ2ΙCΕ ΚΑΙ ΜΗΝ ΕΥΨΑΝ̄ΗΠΩΑ ΔΥΩ Ν̄CΕΠΩΤ Ν̄CΩΟΥ ΕΒΟΛ 2ΙΤ̄Η ΚΕΛΛΑΥΞ ΔΥΩ Ν̄CΕΤΑΜΟΟΥ ΕΝΕΤΕ Ν̄CΕΨΟΟΠ ΔΗ
 ΪΑΚΚΩΒΕ Ν̄ΨΩΕ ΕΝ 2ΟΛΩC ΕΤΕ ΛΑΟΥΕ ΤΑΚΟ †ΩΟΜ̄ΗΤΕ ΕΤΕ ΝΕΪ ΝΕ [C]ΕΠΟΡ[Χ] ΕΒΟΛ
 ΕΥΝΑ Μ̄ΠΙCΤΙC [ΔΥΧΙ Γ]ΑΡ Ν̄[ΠC]ΟΡΟΥΝΕ ΕΘΗΤ [ΝΔ]ΕΙ ΝΕ ΝΡΑΝ Ν̄ΤΩΟΜ̄ΗΤΕ [C]ΑΠΠΙΡΑ Μ̄
 CΟΥCΑΝΝΑ Μ̄Ν [Ι]ΩΑΝΝΑ (28.21–29.6)

James' question could appear to be a non sequitur, but it follows within the logic of the text. *I ApocJas* has consistently linked the need for transformation of the self to preparation for martyrdom. James follows this logic in asking about three female martyrs. These women “were worthy,” just as the earlier women were “worthy of the One Who Is.” They have been persecuted, just as Jesus has been and just as James will be. My reading here differs from the primary English translation of the Tchacos Codex version. Meyer and Gaudard translate $\epsilon\upsilon\omega\alpha\lambda\eta\bar{\mu}\pi\omega\alpha$ as “they deserved (it),” suggesting that the women were rightly persecuted. I think it is highly unlikely that this passage should be understood as Meyer and Gaudard take it. The word “persecuted” appears at one other point in the text, describing a great Christian leader (25.9). As Brankaer and Bethge point out, the far more likely translation of the intransitive $\bar{\mu}\pi\omega\alpha$ is “were worthy,” not “deserved.”²⁴ Nowhere else in the text is martyrdom a bad thing, and nowhere else in the text is sympathy shown to persecutors rather than the persecuted.

One might suggest there is a negative connotation to the description of the women being “separated from a place of faith.” If they have received a “deserved” punishment, then it could follow that these women are a negative example for James.²⁵ I think that within a text so positive about martyrs, the initial assumption should be that persecuted martyrs are not imagined to deserve their fate. Further, as Antti Marjanen points out, the text has elsewhere talked about a progress of Christian spiritual development which begins with faith and progresses to knowledge.²⁶ When Jesus predicts his resurrection at the end of the first dialogue, he explains

²⁴ Brankaer and Bethge, 246.

²⁵ Funk, “The Significance of the Tchacos Codex,” 513–514. Funk claims that *I ApocJas* presents an “exemplary distinction of good and bad female disciples.” He draws this conclusion from his reading of 27.6–9, where James asks if some of the disciples are more honored than others. There is a certain logic to this, since you would expect Jesus to contrast more and less honored disciples in response. However, the presentation of the three suggests instead that they are also highly honored disciples and models for James’ imitation in preparation for martyrdom.

²⁶ Marjanen, “The Seven Women Disciples,” 542–543.

the purpose of his reappearance. “[And many] will turn toward faith, and they will increase in it until they come to knowledge” (ΟΥΝ [2Α2 ΔΕ] ΝΑΠΩΩΗΕ Ε2Ο[Υ]Ν ΕΤΙΠΙCΤ[ΙC] ΑΥΩ ΝCΕΡ̄ ΑΥΞΑ[Ν]Ε Ν2ΗΤC [ΩΑ]ΝΤΟΥΕΙ ΕΠCΟ[ΟΥΝ]Ε; 16.12–15). Knowledge follows upon faith as a higher state of attainment. Based on this interpretation, Brankaer and Bethge plausibly fill the lacuna on 29.3 to explain that the women have separated from a place of faith not as punishment, but because they have now acquired knowledge. Brankaer and Bethge take the “hidden knowledge” as the further blessing received by these women martyrs, and I have followed their suggestion in my transcription and translation.²⁷

Thus, the women should be understood as martyrs worthy of praise and forerunners to James. James asks whether they have perished and whether they have suffered. The statement, “it is not necessary for anyone to perish” does not reject martyrdom. Rather, this corresponds to the consistent interpretation *IApocJas* has presented of martyrdom and death. When Jesus reappears after his crucifixion, he says, “I did not suffer at all and I did not die” (18.8–9). The text does not deny the bodily death of Jesus, but rather his eternal, essential aspect survived bodily death unharmed. The three women, like Jesus, have not truly perished in that their souls survive. The readers and hearers urged to inculcate knowledge and prepare for martyrdom can see in these women the ideal toward which they are practicing.

Two of the names for these women, Susanna and Johanna, also appear in the list of Jesus’ women disciples in *Luke* 8.3. *IApocJas* might record a memory of these women as ideal disciples, but their connection to martyrdom is unclear. With Sapphira, by contrast, her presentation as an honored disciple requires some explanation. In *Acts* 5, Sapphira speaks falsely to the community of the apostles about profits which she and her husband derived from the sale

²⁷ Brankaer and Bethge, *Codex Tchacos*, 247.

of land. For this crime, she is struck down and killed in their midst, apparently by the power of God. This means that unlike Susanna and Johanna, Sapphira's death is narrated in the New Testament. Susanna and Johanna do not have any connection to martyrdom or death within the early Christian tradition. Sapphira does. Perhaps an against-the-grain reading here could extract Sapphira the martyr from *Acts* 5. If one imagines that her death was unjustified and that she was a true disciple like Susanna and Johanna, then *Acts* 5 could be read as a martyrdom story. *IApocJas* has evinced a capacity for a negative portrayal of the twelve disciples, and so possibly it could be presenting here a critical reading of the *Acts* story.²⁸

This is a necessarily speculative reading, but it does have some internal textual support. James' final question to Jesus is unclear, and this martyrological interpretation provides a possible explanation of what it means. The Coptic reads $\bar{\text{N}}\text{CETAMOY} \text{ ENETE } \bar{\text{N}}\text{CE}\Psi\text{OON AN}$, and there is no obvious antecedent for at least one of the third-plural pronouns with the first verb. Meyer and Gaudard propose that James asks whether the women "have been told things which are not (true)." Brankaer and Bethge, however, suggest that this line may refer to the reading of *Acts*. It could also mean, "things were said about them which are not (true)" in reference to the negative portrayal of Sapphira in *Acts* 5.²⁹ It is not true, James' question implies, that Sapphira's death was justified. Using the strategies of martyrdom discourse, *IApocJas* resignifies the death of Sapphira as a martyrdom. Thus Sapphira becomes associated with other honored female

²⁸ Vielleux, *Les deux apocalypses de Jacques*, 9–10; William Schoedel, "A Gnostic Interpretation of the Fall of Jerusalem: The First Apocalypse of James," *Novum Testamentum* 33 (1991), 169–173; Antti Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 137–143; Hartenstein, *Die zweite Lehre*, 192–193. Even if the text is not entirely dismissive in its treatment of the twelve, their subordinate status to James is maintained. As Elaine Pagels has argued, this sort of implicit conflict was common in early Christian literature. Christians who rejected the apostolic succession through the twelve apostles often did so by telling stories which challenge the authority of the twelve. Elaine Pagels, "Visions, Appearance, and Apostolic Authority: Gnostic and Orthodox Traditions," in *Gnosis: Festschrift für Hans Jonas* (ed. Barbara Aland; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1978), 415–430.

²⁹ Brankaer and Bethge, *Codex Tchacos*, 247–248.

disciples of Jesus. In turn, Johanna and Susanna become associated with one of the first Christian martyrs.

James asks no more questions after he learns about the three women martyrs. The dialogue ends and he proceeds to his own death. It seems evident that these three women stand as moral exemplars for James. Mary, Salome, and Arsinoe were presented as models for ethical imitation. Now three women martyrs appear in the discussion, and Jesus praises them before James goes to be martyred. Jesus' final revelations about the seven women provide James the final teaching to enable his preparation. He imitates them quite directly in his own martyrdom.

In antiquity, imitation presumes a hierarchical power relationship. As Elizabeth Castelli puts it, "first of all, mimesis is constituted through a hierarchy in which the model is imbued with perfection and wholeness, and the copy represents an attempt to reclaim that perfection." The people striving to transform themselves implicitly establish the model as perfect and themselves as lacking in comparison. This establishes a clear power structure. "The question of authority is foregrounded in the mimetic relationship; the model has authority to which the copy submits."³⁰ I argued previously that *IApocJas* reflects an ethical reading of the *Gospel of John* in which Christological sayings in *John* became the basis for practices of imitation. *IApocJas* exhorts readers and hearers to understand that they are children from the father, in the manner of Jesus. This understanding will then produce ethical transformation aimed at preparation for martyrdom. The structure of imitation and power, as described by Castelli, fits well with this Christological ethics. *IApocJas* exhorts readers and hearers to imitate the perfection of Christ.

The relations of power and authority grow more complicated when the seven women become models for imitation. The presentation of the women displaces Jesus from his position as the authoritative model. Jesus shifts to become the inimitable new priest, whose action enables

³⁰ Elizabeth Castelli, *Imitating Paul: A Discourse of Power* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1991), 86.

the transformation of the first three women—Mary, Salome, and Arsinoe. James is exhorted to be transformed in the manner of the women, not to become priestly in the manner of Jesus. Because this passage displaces Jesus from his position as authoritative model, it maintains a relation of power between the model and the imitators while changing the identity of those actors. The perfection of these women, enabled by Christ’s intervention, authorizes them. Jesus in turn exhorts James to a practice of imitation. The status of the women as models for ethical imitation becomes more starkly clear when it is revealed that three of them were also martyred.

The text’s overriding goal of preparation for martyrdom here interweaves with its articulations of sexual difference. James is exhorted to imitate female disciples and martyrs in order to prepare for martyrdom himself. The power-laden logic of ethical imitation which the text has used now places a group of female disciples and martyrs in the space previously occupied by Christ. This helps to explain, I think, why the articulations of sexual difference in *1ApocJas* consistently serve to authorize these seven women in various ways. The consistency of the text in authorizing the women contrasts to its relative inconsistency in theorizing sexual difference. The rhetorical aims of *1ApocJas* can be discerned here. The articulation of sexual difference as a coherent whole only matters secondarily to the primary goal of establishing the power and perfection of the seven women, whom James must imitate.³¹

³¹ I can draw a contrast here to Jacques Lacan’s theory of sexual difference. In his *Seminar XX: Encore*, Lacan distinguishes between two possible gendered positions in discourse. One may speak from the side of the man or the side of the woman. He argues, however, that discourse is structured such that a speaker is presumed and expected to speak from the side of the male. To be a speaking subject, one must first presume one’s own coherence and the coherence of one’s speech. This coherence, according to Lacan, is symbolized by possession of the phallus. This is why speaking as a coherent, universal subject is classed as masculine in his system. Amy Hollywood summarizes his position, “Anatomically or genetically defined male and female human beings can occupy either the position of the masculine speaking subject or that of the feminine speaking subject (this flexibility is most clear, however, with regard to men). The difference between the two positions, as Lacan’s notations show, is in the relationship they take toward the phallus, the transcendental signifier within male-dominant society through which meaning is fixed and grounded.” As Hollywood argues, this fixing and grounding of meaning is ultimately illusory for Lacan, as likewise is the possession of the “phallus.” He seeks then to speak not from the side of illusory wholeness, but from the side of the feminine speaking subject. Anyone who inscribes himself or herself into the role of the feminine speaking subject, he says, “will not allow for any universality—it will be a not-whole.” Lacan values and seeks after such a

The precise contours of the relationship between these women and the divine realms are not fully worked out, but the authority of the women as exemplars is never questioned. In their moral perfection, their relation to Jesus, and their ultimate martyrdoms, these women have achieved precisely the preparation for martyrdom the text exhorts. In its improvisational usage of various available models of sexual difference, *IApocJas* seeks logical coherence but will sacrifice perfect coherence in service of finding justifications for the women's status as models for imitation. While any association of *IApocJas* to historical martyrdoms must be speculative, the text's insistence on the valorization of these women demands some explanation. It is not implausible that *IApocJas* might use gospel women to stand in for female martyrs who had previously been dialogue partners, just as it uses James as the paradigmatic martyr in training and Christian in dialogue whom readers and hearers should themselves imitate. The text's insistence on not only honoring these female disciples and martyrs, but on making their imitation of central importance to the practice of preparation for martyrdom, might then reflect an engagement with the history of Christian martyrdom.

not-whole, anti-universal position, which he classes as feminine. No such valuation of the not-whole appears in *IApocJas*. I have argued that *IApocJas* does not articulate an entirely coherent model of sexual difference, but this is not because it reflects an incomplete, not-whole, possibly feminine position. Rather, the difficulty arises from the improvisational use of a variety of resources to honor women martyrs and disciples. Hollywood, *Sensible Ecstasy*, 147; Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book XX: On Feminine Sexuality* (ed. Jacques-Alain Miller; trans. Bruce Fink; New York: W.W. Norton, 1998), 81.

Conclusion: Sexual Difference and Martyrdom

The *First Apocalypse of James* marshals a variety of resources to establish “the seven women whom all the generations bless” as moral exemplars. I want to return here to the question of martyrdom and sexual difference. Scholarly discussions have focused on the “masculinizing” or “feminizing” strategies used in portraying male and female martyrs. As Stephanie Cobb summarizes the issue, Christian martyrdom texts authorized women by “illustrating the necessity and possibility of women moving toward ideals of masculinity,” while at the same time feminizing strategies “ensur[e] that the female martyr is safely placed back within the confines of proper, domestic femininity.”¹ The logic of hierarchical sexual difference holds cleanly, even if some women might attain to a masculine state for certain purposes.

This logic does not hold so neatly in the *First Apocalypse of James*. I should note that the discussion of female martyrs does engage with one classic masculinizing strategy. *IApocJas* relates the power of women disciples and martyrs to their triumph over the lower divine figure “femaleness.” The women have become perfected and undefiled because they have surpassed femaleness. In the logic of the text, they recognize theological and anthropological truths, in particular that the body is not the self. The body derives from the “rulers” who were created by femaleness, and so this recognition constitutes triumph over femaleness. Thus for these women, “the work of the female has attained to the male.” They are masculinized according to a vision of sexual difference in which perfection attends only to maleness, and the perfection of the female entails becoming in some fashion male. I have argued that although this passage indeed invokes such a radical articulation of sexual difference, in the context of *IApocJas* it does not do so univocally.

¹ Cobb, *Dying to Be Men*, 122–123.

Rather, the surrounding passages engage in strategies to honor these women which cannot be classified simply as masculinizing. They are honored and elevated to divine status through links drawn to their counterparts in the divine realms, the seven spirits of prophecy and the undefiled Sophia. Even the discussion of the women “attain[ing] to maleness” recalls the heavenly Sophia by stating states that they have become “undefiled.” The strategy here would therefore be better characterized as feminizing than masculinizing. It is through their association with female powers of the divine realms that the women are reckoned as honored disciples and martyrs. This is a feminizing strategy which does not serve to domesticate the women but to heighten their authority as moral exemplars. Indeed, the very capacity of these women to become martyrs and moral exemplars depends on their association with divine female figures.

These discussions of sexual difference do not concern only the female disciples and martyrs. Crucially, they are presented as models for ethical imitation by men as well as women. This presentation occurs literally in the text from Jesus to James, and rhetorically from the text to its readers and hearers. The interpretation of scripture in *1ApocJas* enables these articulations of sexual difference. I have argued that the text’s exhortation to martyrdom is dependent on a reading of the *Gospel of John*. This reading seeks to bridge the gap in *John* between ethics and Christology by making the Jesus a model for imitation. The Christological statements of identity in *John* become the basis for an ethics of preparation for martyrdom in *1ApocJas*. I see the relationship between *John* and *1ApocJas* as an intertextual one, which means that I expect *1ApocJas* to be crucially shaped, in non-determinate ways, by its dialogical relation to *John*. This shaping plays out in the text’s discussion of moral exemplars. The method of connecting ethics and Christology produces a coherent reading of *John*, but when applied to *Isaiah* the results are different. The ethical exemplars shift from Christ to a set of seven women who are martyrs,

prophets and disciples. The seven women, who become ambiguous objects of identification for James and readers and hearers of the text, arise from the text's interpretation of scripture. The intertextual relations between *1ApocJas*, *John* and *Isaiah* provide key resources for the text's articulations of sexual difference.

Virginia Burrus suggests that one may imagine that martyrdom texts were composed and read by men who appropriated a "partly 'feminized' subjectivity" from their identification with the female martyr.² Such a relationship appears clearly when James is exhorted to imitate female martyrs as moral exemplars. It is made possible by the intertextual relations between *1ApocJas*, *John*, and *Isaiah*. This creates a complex doubling effect, as the strategies which authorize the female disciples in turn structure the practices of the self which James, and by extension readers and hearers of the text, are to undertake. Effective preparation for martyrdom depends on developing an association with the divine Sophia. At the moment of greatest drama in the text, when Jesus explains to James how he will defeat his captors in the divine realms, Jesus tells him to invoke the undefiled Sophia (TC 22.4–20, NHC V 35.5–23). By her power James triumphs and attains to the divine realms.³ His capacity to enact the "confession of faith in conduct" relies on the intervention of the higher Sophia. The economy of action enabled by these practices has a feminized and feminizing quality.

I believe that *1ApocJas*' capacity to articulate such non-masculinized visions of the perfect martyr are directly related to the text's engagement with discourses of martyrdom. As I have argued, *1ApocJas* rejects the critical importance of what Heracleon calls the "confession of the voice" which the martyr undertakes in the law court or the arena. There is no climactic

² Burrus, "Torture and Travail," 71.

³ Einar Thomassen noted this peculiarity in the text, that Sophia takes on roles of both psychopomp and paraclete. Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed*, 413.

interrogation scene or public confession in this text. However, *IApocJas* does describe an interrogation of the soul by a group of cosmic “rulers.” In this interrogation, the soul is to respond with a complex statement of identity that locates the true origin of humanity in the divine realms. Thus, *IApocJas* transposes the generic cliché of the martyr’s interrogation and final statement of identity into the divine realms. This displacement has the effect of expanding the confession of Christian identity from merely “I am a Christian” into a full elaboration of the nature of the perfected human that is based within a complex theological discussion. The text presents this full elaboration of the theory of the human in a form meant to be memorized, representing it as a ritual of repetition and dialogue. By including in this climactic dialogue a full elaboration of its anthropology and theology, *IApocJas* implicitly argued that this “confession of faith and conduct,” rather than the public proclamation of the voice, determines proper martyrdom. Much of the pressing importance of articulating a masculine version of the martyr’s virtue derived from the unrelentingly masculinist ideology of the arena. Because *IApocJas* has works to separate its vision of true martyrdom from these public confessions, I believe the text has a greater opportunity to articulate visions of the perfected martyr which can intermingle male and female or masculine and feminine characteristics.

Appendix: Outline of the *First Apocalypse of James*

1) First Dialogue, before the death of Jesus	TC 10.1–16.25 NHC V 24.10–30.11
a) Initial discussion of femaleness and theology	TC 10.1–11.7 NHC V 24.10–25.5
b) Jesus predicts his death, James voices his fear	TC 11.7–12.4 NHC V 25.5–25.19
c) Dialogue on scripture and salvation	TC 12.4–14.5 NHC V 25.20–27.12
d) Dialogue on fear of persecution by world rulers	TC 14.6–15.18 NHC V 27.13–28.3
e) Jesus predicts his death and resurrection, departs	TC 15.18–16.25 NHC V 28.3–30.11
2) Interlude, the death and resurrection of Jesus	TC 16.26–17.22 NHC V 30.11–31.5
a) Report of death of Jesus	TC 16.26–16.28 NHC V 30.11–30.14
b) James as a comforter to the disciples	TC 16.28–17.15 NHC V 30.14–30.26
c) James prays alone, Jesus returns	TC 17.15–17.22 NHC V 30.27–31.5
3) Second Dialogue, after the resurrection of Jesus	TC 17.23–29.15 NHC V 31.5–43.19
a) Jesus predicts James' death, offers consolation	TC 17.23–19.21 NHC V 31.5–33.28
b) "Long Revelation Speech" by Jesus	TC 19.21–25.14 NHC V 33.28–39.11
a. Embedded dialogue with full revelation	TC 19.21–23.10 NHC V 33.28–36.13
b. History of the transmission of revelation	TC 23.10–25.14 NHC V 36.13–39.12
c) James proclaims his understanding	TC 25.15–25.17 NHC V 39.12–39.15
d) Dialogue on the seven women	TC 25.17–29.15 NHC V 39.15–43.19
a. Seven women and the spirits of prophecy	TC 25.17–27.4 NHC V 39.15–40.3
b. Discussion of three female disciples	TC 27.4–28.20 NHC V 40.4–41.19
c. Discussion of three female martyrs	TC 28.21–29.15 NHC V 41.19–42.19
4) Conclusion, the death of James	TC 29.18–30.26 NHC V 42.20–44.8
a) James preaches to the disciples	TC 29.18–29.25 NHC V 42.20–42.24
b) James is arrested and killed	TC 29.25–30.26 NHC V 43.4–44.8

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